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ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study describes the influence of family, friends, community organizations, and school on the educational and employment experiences of 146 immigrant adolescent Latinos in Washington (District of Columbia) between 1982 and 1988. All had attended a special high school for at-risk immigrant youth. The following key findings are reported: (1) many of the participants displayed several risk factors that indicated long-term poverty in 1982; (2) the most serious problems while in high school were immigration problems, culture shock, acute economic need, language barriers, and family tensions; (3) support from family, friends, community organizations, and school appear to have enabled the youths to avoid serious psychosocial adjustment problems; (4) despite the fact that most of the youths wanted to enter careers that required a college education, only 10 percent completed as much as 1 year of college; (5) 97 percent of the youth worked at jobs that paid adequate wages in 1988; (6) ethnicity was a major factor in choosing a mate, socializing, and participation in community organizations; (7) the great majority were optimistic about the future; (8) the challenges most frequently cited in 1988 were avoiding drug and alcohol abuse, overcoming negative peer pressure, working hard, setting goals, and accepting responsibility; and (9) motherhood appeared to be the primary determinant of a female's educational status. Fifty-one case studies are included. Statistical data are presented in 35 tables. A 69-item bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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PASSAGES OF AT-RISK YOUTHS

FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD

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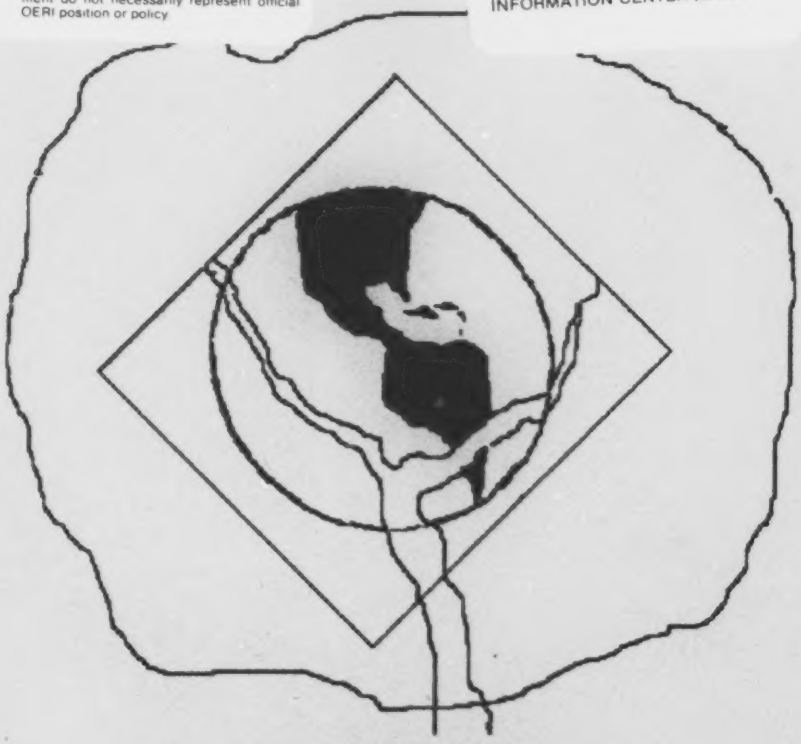

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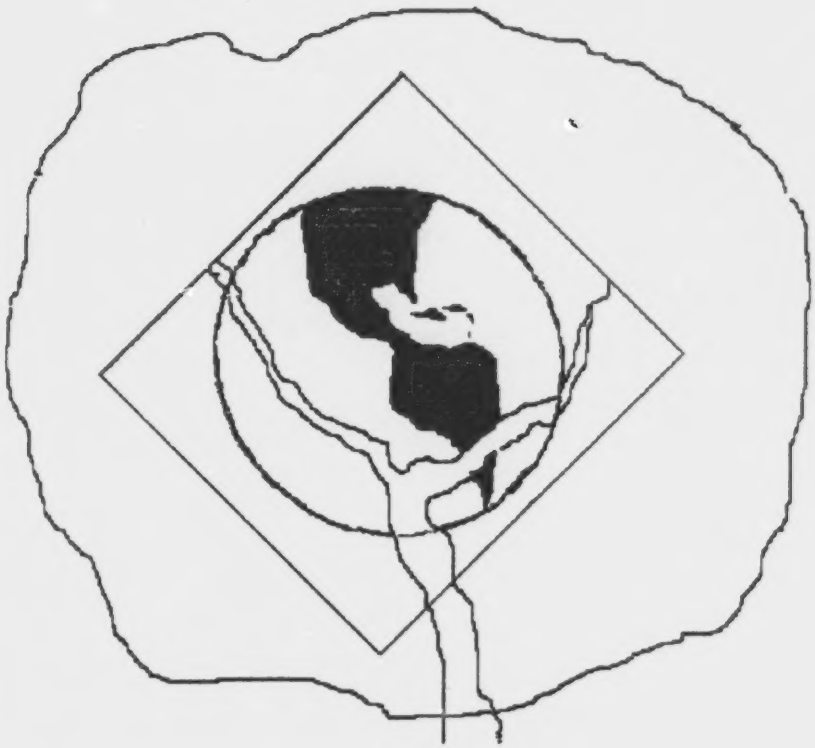

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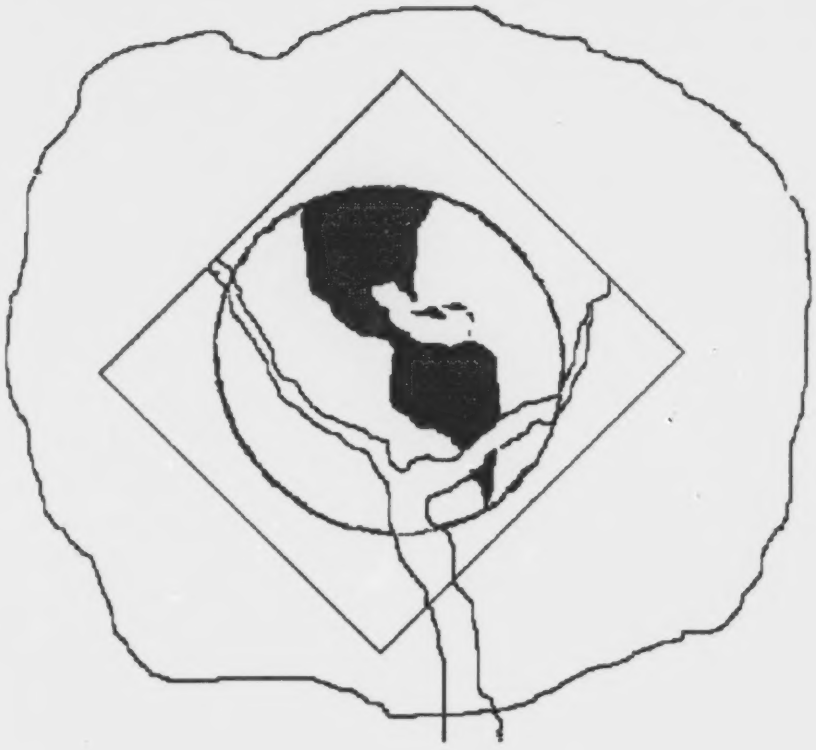

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Although many people contributed to this project, findings are the responsibility of the author.

Executive Summary

This report examines the passage from adolescence to adulthood of a group of young Latinos in Washington, D.C.. For a variety of reasons discussed below, these youths, three-fourths of whom had come to the city from Central America between 1980 and 1982, were at-risk of becoming trapped in the poverty in which most lived when they first arrived in the United States. This report presents a longitudinal description of the educational and employment experiences of this group, and the impact upon those experiences of family, friends, community organizations and publicly funded institutions and programs. Initial data for the report were gathered in study conducted in 1982 and 1983. A follow-up study focussing on the experiences of the same youths after leaving high school was conducted in 1988.

During the 1982-83 study, 181 Spanish-speaking youths were among 250 students at a Washington, D.C. high school who participated in an investigation of the psychological and social adaptation of immigrant adolescents. The school, known as the Multicultural Career Intern Program (MCIP), had recently been founded for the purpose of serving the city's rapidly growing population of educationally at-risk youths from Latin America and other parts of the world. In addition to information on the psychological and social adaptation of immigrant adolescents, data also were collected through survey questionnaires and interviews on the demographic backgrounds and migration histories of these youths.

In 1988, 112 of the 146 (77%) Latino participants from the 1982-83 study who were still living in metropolitan Washington were located and interviewed. Collateral data regarding place of residence, education, domestic status, and employment also were gathered from relatives, friends and former teachers about most of the remaining Latino participants in the 1982-83 study who could not be reached directly. Interviews were designed to elicit detailed information on education and employment, and the influence on these of ethnicity, informal social life and public and community-based institutions.

Poverty and Promise: Latino Youths in Washington. In Chapter 1, the problems of transient and long-term poverty in the United States, in general, and in Washington, in particular, are discussed. Although many people in the United States live in poverty for relatively short periods of time, only a small proportion of all poor people are persistently poor; that is, with incomes below the poverty line for eight of the previous ten years. In 1988, 35% of all Latinos in Washington were living in poverty, nearly twice the rate of Afro-American Washingtonians. Because of migration related growth of the Latino population during the 1980s, however, it is yet to be determined how many of

those temporarily in poverty will be unable to substantially improve their economic circumstances. For the first time in the history of the city, a large number of young Latinos were coming of age in Washington. Documentation of the experiences of some of those youths over a period of six years provides a unique opportunity to identify the social, cultural and institutional factors affecting the future of this emerging minority group in the city.

Many of the youths in this study had several "risk factors" increasing their chances of becoming trapped in long-term poverty. For example, fewer than half grew up in families where either parent had completed high school. Fewer than one-third lived in a household where the father was present during their teenage years. Many lived alone or with friends while attending high school. Nearly all lived in households with incomes below the poverty line. A need to work, language barriers and other problems increased the likelihood that many of these youths would be unable to complete high school, and therefore be cut off from future economic opportunities. Studies have found that when at-risk youths perceive that they have little chance of achieving success in legitimate economic and social roles in adult society, they are more likely to redirect their interests to activities that either are irrelevant to, or inconsistent with, progress in education and the development of careers. The pattern that emerges of Latino participation in the economic and social life of Washington will largely depend on how the young perceive their chances of "getting ahead," and the effectiveness of educational and career development programs in enabling them to do so.

The Passage to Washington. Chapter 2 discusses the experiences of study participants just prior to departure from their native countries, en route to Washington, and shortly after their arrival in the city. Although Washington has been home to a small, multinational Latino community since the 1960s, the Spanish speaking population of the city expanded rapidly during the 1980s. Most of the Latino newcomers were from Central America, particularly El Salvador. Increased migration corresponded to escalating levels of civil warfare and deteriorating economic conditions in the region. Many study participants, especially Salvadoreans, left their homes because they were directly threatened by the civil war. Others left because they (or their parents) saw little hope for the future due to deteriorating economic and social conditions. Most of the participants in this study came to Washington because of the city's strong economy and many available jobs, and because of the presence of friends or relatives who previously had come to the city in search of work. Although most were eager to take advantage of the opportunities they saw around them, 85% indicated during the 1982-83 study that they hoped to return to live in their native counties once circumstances there improved.

Most study participants were of low socioeconomic status in their native countries. Nearly all whose parents were profes-

sionals or business persons prior to migration experienced a sharp decline in occupational status as they resettled in Washington. Two-thirds of the mothers of study participants who were present in the city in the early 1980s either worked for commercial housekeeping services or as domestic workers. Immigration problems, culture shock, acute economic need, language barriers, and family tensions associated with the reconfiguration of families during migration were among the most serious migration related problems. Chapter 2 examines these problems through the stories of several study participants.

What Does It Mean To Be At-Risk? Challenges and Resources During Adolescence. Chapter 3 examines the psychological and social dimensions of what being "at-risk" meant for study participants during their teenage years. Despite the many problems they faced, the 1982-83 study found that these youths did not suffer from unusually serious psychological adjustment problems while in high school. Poverty, reasons for migration, language, and other social, cultural and economic variables all were found to be unrelated to psychological health. In contrast, subjective measures of social adaptation within the family, at school and with friends were related to mental health status. In general, the perception of social support at home and within the youths' immediate community was the most important determinant of psychological health. These findings indicate the importance of family, informal friendship networks, and culturally attuned community institutions for the healthy psychological adjustment of teenage study participants shortly after their arrival.

Despite their relatively healthy psychological adjustment as teenagers, this group had to accommodate their high hopes for the future with harsh realities interfering with their ability to continue in school. More than three-fourths of study participants indicated during the 1982-83 study that they would like to work in one of the professions. By 1988, however, only 61% had graduated from high school and very few had been able to make significant progress toward a bachelor's degree. Because of problems such as a pressing need to work and handicaps associated with their immigration status, many were forced to quit school and consequently to modify their hopes for the future. Nearly all worked while in high school, many in full-time jobs at night. A majority worked either in restaurants or in the cleaning of downtown office buildings. In addition to these economic problems, Chapter 3 also examines other challenges study participants had to face as teenagers, including negative peer pressure, loneliness, premature pregnancy, and conflicts about cultural identity.

Besides the many challenges confronting study participants during adolescence, these youths also had some important resources available to assist them. Family, friends, and ethnic community constituted their system of "social security" in times of need, although sometimes the system functioned far from perfectly. In addition to this informal system of social support, Lati-

no community organizations and their high school, MCIP, also played a crucial role in their adaptation. The school and community organizations were especially important sources of practical and emotional support for adolescents who had left their parents behind when they come to Washington. MCIP, in particular, provided a wholesome environment in which these youths could adjust to life in Washington. Through its explicitly multicultural curriculum and its career development programs, MCIP prepared its students to effectively participate in the wider society while reinforcing their cultural identities. In so doing, the school and community organizations bridged the social, cultural and economic gaps between this community of at-risk youths and opportunities available in the wider society.

MCIP's career development program was a particularly important resource for the youths in this study. Fifty-eight of the 112 1988 interviewees, including both graduates and non-graduates, participated in a career development program or received some form of vocational instruction while enrolled at MCIP. Fully two-thirds of those who received vocational instruction or who participated in high school sponsored internships were working in related fields in 1988. One-half of all the high school based programs were in office management. These programs included instruction in word processing and typing, a more elaborate office management training program, and government subsidized work experience internships. Twenty-one of 28 interviewees (all women) who participated in an office management program at MCIP were working as secretaries in 1988. Also, nine of eleven who were placed in internships in medical and dental settings while in high school went on to receive additional training in those fields after graduating and were working in related jobs in 1988. Internships and classroom based vocational instruction were equally effective in leading to future employment.

Post-Secondary Education and Job Training. Post-secondary education and job training are the focus of discussion in Chapter 4. Although no one had graduated from college, nearly one-half of study participants had either finished a post-secondary job training program, earned an associate degree, or completed at least one year of college. In addition, many others had enrolled in GED programs, English classes and other types of educational programs. Altogether, four out of five study participants had participated in some type of educational program after leaving high school. By far, the most common type of post-secondary education was the short-term job training program.

Two-thirds of the high school graduates and one-fourth of drop-outs had finished a post-secondary job training or associate degree program or completed at least one year of college. Women were much more likely than men to have completed a job training program. As in high school, office management programs were the most frequently utilized type of job training. Most drop-outs who received job training after leaving high school participated in programs sponsored by community based organizations. Grad-

uates were more likely to enroll in programs sponsored by private trade schools, public school systems, and corporate employers.

Nine of the eleven study participants who earned associate degrees completed programs in health care or dentistry. All but two were first exposed to the fields in which they would later earn their associate degrees through MCIP internships.

Despite the fact that most study participants desired to enter careers that required a college education when they were in high school, only one in ten had completed as much as one year of college, and only three individuals were close to earning a bachelor's degree in the foreseeable future. The inability to continue with their education was, by far, the disappointment most frequently cited by study participants in 1988.

Employment. The most salient finding about employment reported in Chapter 5 is that finding a job seldom had been a problem for study participants. In 1988, only one informant reported that she was involuntarily unemployed. Ninety-seven percent of study participants worked, nearly all in full-time jobs. By almost any standard, this group of young Latinos was very industrious. All who were enrolled in college or any other type of educational program were simultaneously working. Even most mothers with young children worked.

Although finding a job was seldom difficult, finding a "good job" was not as easy. A good job was defined at least as much by the nature of the work as the monetary value of wages. A good job was considered one in which a worker was respected primarily because of his or her knowledge and skills -- and not merely because of how hard one worked or because of a good (i.e. compliant) attitude. Relatively few study participants expressed dissatisfaction about the wages they earned. Far more, however, expressed a desire to find more satisfying employment. The most common type of employment reported by study participants in 1988 was restaurant work. Although restaurant employment also was the most common source of work in high school, most who continued to work in restaurants in 1988 had experienced considerable upward mobility and were earning wages well above the poverty line. The better restaurant jobs, however, were held exclusively by men. Most of the 16% of study participants employed in this field were male high school drop-outs working as waiters and chefs, in expensive restaurants. Restaurant work provided the opportunity to earn an adequate income to uneducated men who were willing to work hard and to do whatever was necessary to please their bosses. Construction work was another source of good wages for men, regardless of their education. Eight percent of study participants worked in construction.

In sharp contrast to the experiences of men, however, education and job skills were absolutely necessary for women to find jobs with adequate wages. The most common category of employment for women was secretarial work. One-third of all women and 16% of all study participants were employed in this field. Despite the fact that women had received more post-secondary education

than men, on average, men earned higher wages.

Nine percent of study participants worked in skilled positions in the fields of medicine, nursing and dentistry. Ten percent were employed as non-medical professionals or were in business. Seven percent were skilled laborers, 7% unskilled laborers, and 12% provided services such as in retail sales. Six percent of study participants, all women, were employed as domestic workers. Most who were so employed worked as domestics because of problems with their immigration status or because of a desire to work while simultaneously taking care of their own children.

Cultural Pluralism and Structural Integration. In chapter 6, the focus shifts to the social and cultural dimensions of study participants lives since leaving high school, including a discussion of marriage and fertility, peer groups and leisure activities. Also discussed are study participants' hopes for the future and their views about the most serious challenges facing young Latinos in Washington. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the risk of entrapment in persistent poverty, and the role of community resources, including family, friends, community based organizations, and publicly funded institutions, in preventing this from occurring.

Ethnicity was of major importance to study participants in choosing a spouse and in social interaction outside of work. In 1988, 42% of study participants were married, more than eight in ten to other Latinos. Less than half, however, had married spouses of the same nationality. More than six in ten study participants stated that virtually all of their friends are Latinos; only 2% said that most of their friends were not Latino. Slightly more than one-third belonged to some type of formal organization, mostly to Catholic and Protestant churches. Most said that their congregations were predominantly Latino.

Hopes for the Future. Hopes expressed by study participants generally indicated a desire to settle in, settle down and to get ahead. Many still maintained the long deferred hope, first expressed in high school, of entering a professional career. As nearly all had recently acquired their legal residency papers, some were hopeful that they would finally be able to do so. For the many who already had started families, however, returning to school to prepare for a profession no longer seemed practical. Nonetheless, the hopes of most study participants still conformed to very traditional North American aspirations: to have a family, own a home, and to develop a satisfying career -- even if it is not the one originally hoped for. The great majority (90%) of those interviewed in 1988 were optimistic about their futures.

Challenges Facing Young Latinos. The most frequently cited challenges facing young Latinos in 1988 were: avoidance of alcohol and drug abuse; the need to overcome negative peer pressure; the need to work hard; the need to set goals; and, the acceptance

of responsibility for oneself and one's future. Many informants described how substance abuse had affected close relatives and friends. Several reported having overcome serious problems with drugs or alcohol, themselves. Indeed, one of the original 181 study participants reportedly had died of a drug overdose. Although factors beyond the control of informants were sometimes mentioned as important challenges facing young Latinos (e.g. discrimination, prejudice, immigration problems, inadequate employment possibilities), it is significant that the most frequently mentioned challenges were ones that they, themselves, could control. This suggests that, despite the formidable economic, cultural, and political hurdles they had to overcome, most believed that they were primarily responsible for their own destinies. Even when citing instances in which they believe they had been exploited or discriminated against, most expressed the conviction that they could not afford to let these problems interfere with efforts to achieve their goals.

Education, Careers, and Motherhood. Thirty-six percent of unmarried female study participants were mothers. Being a high school drop-out and a single mother are two of the risk factors that have been found to increase the probability of becoming trapped in persistent poverty. Most male high school drop-outs in this study had little difficulty finding employment in restaurant and construction jobs paying wages substantially above the poverty line. In contrast, female drop-outs were much less likely to find jobs paying adequate wages. Mothers, whether married or single, were the least likely to have graduated from high school or to have received any post-secondary education. Only 43% of mothers had completed high school or earned a GED as compared to 80% of childless women. There was no significant difference in the rate of high school completion for single and married mothers. Seventy percent of childless women had completed a job training program, associate degree, or at least one year of college, but only 44% of mothers had done so. As with high school graduation rates, there were no significant difference in the post-secondary educational accomplishments of married and unmarried mothers. Motherhood rather than marital status appeared to be the primary determinant of women's educational status. Although motherhood inhibited the progress of many women in their careers and with their education, married mothers generally could rely upon the economic and social support of their husbands. Single mothers faced greater hardships, but, with a few notable exceptions, most had available alternative sources of support from within their own families.

Social support, from family, friends, school and community organizations was of paramount importance in preventing most in this group from becoming trapped in persistent poverty. These same sources also were instrumental in providing functional values, practical assistance, skills, and the essential social connections that were necessary to effectively function in society.

The young Latinos in this study overcame many difficulties in their passages from adolescence to adulthood, and many had experienced considerable success in their careers. Although their struggles to succeed oftentimes were little short of heroic, participants in this study had access to some effective educational and job training programs that may not have been available to others. Other young Latinos in Washington never had the opportunity to attend MCIP, or any other high school, because of a pressing need to work or because they had not even gone to elementary school in their native countries. Also, nearly all of the participants in this study had become legal residents of the United States. For the many Latino youths in the city who, for one reason or another, cannot qualify for legal residency, it is doubtful that the outlook would be so positive.

Although not necessarily representative of all young Latinos in Washington, the stories that this group tells of their successes and failures can be instructive. They provide a detailed description of the problems they faced as at-risk youths, and how public institutions, community organizations, their families, and the youths, themselves, effectively addressed those problems. The experiences of this group can be helpful in developing a better understanding of the needs of other at-risk youths and in developing effective interventions to enhance their opportunity to succeed.

Chapter 1

Washington Latinos at the Crossroads

This report describes the passage from adolescence to adulthood of a group of young Latinos, all of whom attended a school called the Multicultural Career Intern Program (MCIP) in the early 1980s. In 1982 and 1983, 181 Latinos were among the 250 MCIP students who participated in a study of the mental health and social adaptation of immigrant adolescents. In 1988, a follow-up study was conducted of the employment and educational status of the Latino participants from the previous study, with an emphasis upon the various factors that influenced their career paths and schooling.

As will be described below, many of these Latino youths had one or more of the characteristics that are statistically associated with the risk of becoming trapped in long-term poverty (e.g. non-completion of high school, growing up in a female headed household). Statistics alone, however, can only describe the correlation of variables deemed by social observers to be important. They cannot explain the real-life challenges that people face, or the resources they utilize in addressing those challenges. Among the challenges confronting participants in this study were finding employment in rewarding careers, getting an education despite financial, linguistic, cultural and political obstacles, and making choices between activities producing immediate gratification, and those consistent with the realization of their high hopes for the future.

The youths' descriptions of their experiences help to explain the human reality behind statistics regarding employment, education and poverty. The primary objectives of this report, then, are to describe: (1) the problems encountered by this group of at-risk Latino youths as they arrived in Washington and later settled in; and, (2) how schools, community organizations and networks of family and friends influenced their cultural adjustment and shaped the pattern of participation in the social and economic institutions of the city.

The emergence of Latinos as a large ethnic minority in Washington in the 1980s provides a unique opportunity to observe the processes shaping their pattern of participation in the social and economic institutions of the city. As a multinational community comprised primarily of recent immigrants, Latinos are, to a very large extent, a population in transition: geographically, socially and culturally. They are a population that is in the process of establishing its place within the wider Washington community. Individually and collectively, they are establishing new patterns of social interaction with their neighbors. What patterns are emerging? Will many become trapped in the poverty

in which most initially lived when they first arrived in the city, or will they realize their hopes for economic advancement? What are the factors that explain their experiences in employment and education? These are among the questions to be addressed in this report.

Before examining these questions through the experiences of study participants as they made the passage from adolescence to adulthood, it is useful to first introduce pertinent concepts, theories and background information. Among the topics to be discussed in the remainder of this chapter are: similarities and differences in transient and long-term poverty; the risk of persistent poverty faced by Washington Latinos; disjunctures in the education of at-risk youths and the economic and social roles they are expected to fill as young adults; social contextualization of ethnicity; and the relationship of personal and group identities to opportunities perceived by at-risk youths to be available.

Transient and Persistent Poverty

William Julius Wilson (1978; 1987) is one of the scholars who has drawn attention to important differences between the large numbers of people living in poverty for short periods of time, and a much smaller number who are persistently poor[1]. Wilson argues that, beginning in the 1960s, the growing concentration and social isolation of minorities living in long-term poverty has become an increasingly serious problem and has led for the first time in U.S. history to the emergence of an urban "underclass." Improved possibilities for upward social mobility for blacks and other minorities has led to the exodus of many of the affluent and stable minority families from central city neighborhoods to the suburbs (1987:3-19). As a result, the concentration of poor black and Hispanic families in some inner city neighborhoods has increased. Since the 1960s, the percentage of such families in which no adult male is present has risen dramatically (1987:63-92). Rates of high school completion in these neighborhoods are low, and so is the rate of participation in the work force (1987:20-62). At the same time, crime, drug addiction, teen pregnancies and out-of-wedlock births all have increased (1987:20-62).

According to Wilson, one of the reasons for the growth of the urban underclass is the changing structure of the U.S. economy (1987:20-62). During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of manufacturing jobs paying relatively high wages decreased. As industrial employment declined, fewer jobs providing secure employment were available to persons without an advanced education. As a result, many young men in inner city neighborhoods withdrew from the job market, many becoming involved in illicit activities. Secondly, because of the withdrawal of the more stable and successful families, and a corresponding decline in the strength of community institutions (e.g. churches, schools), the degree of

social control exerted over deviant behavior was diminished (1987:56). Thus, lack of access to secure employment and the social isolation of the poor in the central cities led to "social pathologies" effectively preventing many poor people from participating in mainstream society[2].

Washington Latinos: Hope, and the Risk of Persistent Poverty

There are ample data to suggest that many U.S. Latinos should be considered "at-risk" -- at risk of becoming trapped in poverty, excluded from all but the most marginal jobs, and of not acquiring an education that would adequately prepare them for effective participation in mainstream economic and social institutions. Hispanic-Americans are more likely than other Americans to hold low-paying manual labor and service jobs (Moore and Pachon 1985:72). As measured by the 1980 census, the median family income of Hispanic families in the U.S. was only $14,700, as compared with the national median of $19,900 for non-Hispanic families (Moore and Pachon 1985:69). Youths of Hispanic origin are far more likely than either Afro-American or Anglo-American youths to drop out of school before graduating (American Council on Education 1983:4-6).

It is necessary to be cautious, however, when drawing conclusions about specific Hispanic communities from aggregate national statistics. Economic conditions, institutional structures, social organization and culture vary significantly from one region of the country to another. Different Latino communities display a variety of ethnic cultural forms, and employ different strategies, as individuals and as members of variously constituted groups (ethnic or otherwise), in relating to the wider society. In some ways, the Latino community of Washington is especially distinctive from those elsewhere in the country. Unlike most U.S. cities in which persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban origin are numerically dominant, the Latino community of Washington is multinational, with the largest single group being Salvadoreans. In addition to El Salvador, other countries from which large numbers have come include Guatemala and the Dominican Republic (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:24). The majority of members of Washington's Latino community migrated to the city in recent years. Few are U.S. born. They arrived in a city where, despite the general affluence of the region, one-third of all children were growing up in households with incomes below the poverty line[3] (Grier and Grier 1988:7).

Poverty among Washington Latinos is nearly twice as prevalent as among Afro-American Washingtonians (Grier and Grier 1988:9). Thirty-five percent of Latinos in Washington had incomes below the poverty line, a rate that is slightly higher than the national average for Hispanics (Moore and Pachon 1985:69). Because of the predominance of immigrants in the Latino community of Washington, it is yet to be determined whether the high rate of poverty among Latinos is a transitory phenomenon, or whether

many will become trapped in long-term poverty.

As a result of migration, for the first time a large number of Latino youths have recently come of age in Washington. Many have made the transition from adolescence to adulthood under difficult circumstances. Most arrived in the city poor, many having been displaced from their homelands by war-related violence and economic dislocation. Upon their arrival, they faced further challenges, including pressing economic need, unfamiliarity with the English language, and the need to get an education that would allow them to find better jobs than the ones in which their parents and older relatives were working. In addition, many also were forced to try to find a way to live in a society that, at least initially, did not recognize them as legal residents. It is easy to imagine that many might become discouraged about their chances of legitimately "making it" in their new society and become trapped in the poverty in which nearly all lived when they first arrived.

Risk Factors for Persistent Poverty. Four characteristics, singly or in combination, have been identified as increasing the likelihood of becoming trapped in persistent or long-term poverty. They are living in a household headed by: (a) a high school drop-out; (b) someone who is unemployed; (c) a woman; and, (d) a person dependent on welfare. Long-term or persistent poverty is defined as having an income below the poverty line in eight of the previous ten years (Grier and Grier 1988:3). In a recent survey 17% of all Washingtonians living in households were reported to have incomes below the poverty line (Grier and Grier 1988:6). According to another survey, 8.6% of all Washingtonians were chronically poor (Greater Washington Research Center 1988:45). In 1988, it was premature to consider the status of persistent poverty with respect to the young Latinos in this study because most had not lived in Washington even as long as eight years. However, many had one or more of the risk factors for long-term poverty. The most prevalent of these related to dropping out of high school and growing up in female-headed households.

High School Drop-Outs. Nationally, the rate of high school completion for Hispanic Americans is much lower than that of either Afro or Anglo-Americans. Thirty-one percent of Latino youths 18 and 19 years of age do not graduate from high school and are not enrolled in school. The comparable figures for Afro and Anglo-Americans are 17% and 14% respectively. The rate of high school completion for older Hispanics is even lower (Bureau of the Census 1986:8-9). Hispanic youths who are immigrants and those whose primary language is Spanish are even more likely to leave high school before graduating (Moore and Pachon 1985:69). Only 21% of Mexican and Central American immigrants between the ages of 18 and 24 had completed high school (Bureau of the Census 1984:13). Based on these data, there is cause for concern that Latino youths in Washington are especially at-risk for not receiving an education that would prepare them to fill stable jobs

paying adequate wages and benefits. Further, youths who came to Washington when they were young, and who have gotten used to life in the U.S., may not be willing to accept the low paying jobs from the secondary labor market (Gordon 1972) that older immigrants typically have held (Moore and Pachon 1985:75). Their values and expectations may be more influenced by "the good life" they see around them than by recollections of life in their native countries.

When first contacted while attending high school in 1982, 51% of study participants reported that the highest level of schooling completed by a parent or guardian was less than twelve years. When re-contacted six years later in 1988, 39% of the study participants, themselves, had not yet completed high school or earned a GED[4]. No figures are available on the rate of high school completion for other Latinos in Washington. The rate of high school completion for the entire D.C. Public School System, however, is well below the national average. Forty-three percent of all students who enter D.C. Public High Schools drop out before graduating (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac 1989:36).

Female Headed Household. Growing up in a female-headed household, another risk factor for long-term poverty, also is prevalent among Washington Latinos. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, Latino migration to Washington during the 1970s was led by women (Cohen 1980:345-373), a trend that continued in the 1980s. At the time of the 1982-1983 study, 69% of adolescent study participants did not live with their fathers. More often than not, families did not migrate intact. Most youths lived with their mothers, aunts, cousins, or even alone. Many, if not most, were at least partially responsible for supporting themselves while in high school. Young Latinas in this study also were at-risk of becoming single mothers. In 1988, more than one-third of unmarried female study participants were single mothers.

Welfare Dependency. The other two risk factors for long-term poverty, welfare dependency and unemployment, were not prevalent among participants in this study. Relatively few Washington Latinos utilize public assistance programs despite high rates of poverty (Singh, McGivern and D'Emilio 1981:112-113). Although by 1988 most of the participants in this study had become legal residents, a large proportion were not documented when they first arrived in the United States. As a result, many avoided contact with government agencies as much as possible for fear of being identified as illegal aliens. Various forms of short-term public and privately funded assistance (e.g. emergency housing, health care) were sometimes provided by Latino community organizations, however. Few of the informants in this study reported ever having received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or food stamps[5].

Unemployment. When first contacted in 1982, none of the teenage study participants indicated in response to a survey question that either parents or guardians were unemployed. In 1988, only one of the 112 interviewees reported that she was involuntarily unemployed. Virtually the only ones not working outside the home in 1988 were a few married mothers with young children and employed spouses. Even those who attended schools or participated in job training programs simultaneously worked.

Statistics and Social Reality

Investigation of the presence or absence of "risk factors" for persistent poverty can be useful in describing the needs of Latinos in Washington, but it does little to explain the social processes related to their employment and educational status. More fundamental to the understanding of the experiences of these youths is the investigation of issues such as: the number and types of jobs being generated by the local economy; the effectiveness of educational and other community institutions in preparing young Latinos to fill available jobs; and, whether the youths believe, or have reason to believe, that they have access to those jobs (Wilson 1978:144-154). At a more immediate level, the future of these and other at-risk youths depends on the degree to which public and community based institutions and informal social networks transcend social, cultural and linguistic barriers separating them from opportunities available in the wider society.

Access to Jobs. The prosperity of metropolitan Washington during the 1980s would appear to favor the successful entry of young Latinos into the city's economy. Unemployment was consistently below the national average during the decade and growth in the number of both skilled and unskilled jobs outpaced expansion in the work force (Bendick and Egan 1988:2). Economic analysts have predicted serious labor shortages in the area for the 1990s (Bendick and Egan 1988:5). An expanding economy and the availability of jobs are advantages that Latinos in Washington have experienced that some other Latino communities in the United States have not.

Despite the fact that Latino adults generally have been successful in finding employment, Latinos have the highest rate of poverty of any group in the city. Income from wages and all other sources has been insufficient to lift 35% of Latino households above the poverty line. Poverty is especially prevalent among employed young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 (Grier and Grier 1988:9). As has been true in many other cities, Latino immigrants to Washington primarily have found jobs as laborers and in the service sector of the economy (Cohen 1979:113; Singh, McGivern & D'Emilio 1979:36), jobs that are part of the secondary labor market (Waldinger 1982:197-222). Such jobs traditionally have been available to ethnic and racial minorities, but often do not pay more than poverty level wages (Gordon 1972).

Washington's work-force is the most highly educated of any in the country (Maxwell 1985:28). Unlike many cities, Washington, has never had a large number of high-wage manufacturing jobs. Nonetheless, 30% of all the jobs available in metropolitan Washington do not require a high school education (Bendick and Egan 1988:7). Only 32% of these jobs, however, have starting salaries sufficient to support a family of three above the poverty line and only one in three is a full-time, permanent position (Greater Washington Research Center 1988:68). Thus, it is clear that jobs, alone are not enough to prevent young Latinos from becoming trapped in poverty. To escape from poverty, they must either find employment in better paying jobs from the secondary labor market (e.g., in construction, some restaurant employment), or acquire the education necessary to enter skilled and professional positions.

Ethnicity. Another factor to consider in attempting to understand the educational and employment experiences of Washington Latinos is the salience of race and ethnicity in interpersonal and intergroup relations[6]. Racially, Washington Latinos are a heterogeneous group, with members having various mixtures of European, American Indian and African ancestry. As newcomers to Washington, Latinos generally did not arrive with the understanding that they shared a common ethnic or racial identity with emigrants from other Latin American nations. Rather, most tended to think of themselves as Salvadorean, Dominican, Guatemalan, Colombian, or whatever their national identity. Over time, several other group identities corresponding to cultural affinities variously shared among Latinos of different nationalities emerge. For example, Afro-Latino Washingtonians, (who may have come from the Dominican Republic, Panama, or elsewhere along the Caribbean rim of Central and South America) may discover shared cultural affinities; similarly with mestizos, persons who were raised in cities, those raised in the country, the affluent, and the poor. The most widely shared trait in Washington's multinational Latino community is the Spanish language. Even Spanish, however, is not shared by all Latinos, as Portuguese-speaking Brazilians and French-speaking Haitians also may be considered "Latins" or "Latinos."

The terms, "Hispanic" and "Latino," then, are somewhat ambiguous ethnic identifiers[7]. Such broad ethnic categories can become meaningful, however, when otherwise diverse peoples find they share common interests in relation to other groups in a society (Barth 1969:16). In interaction with Afro and Anglo Americans, Washingtonians of Latin American origin are likely to be identified as "Hispanics" or "Latinos", and may, themselves, consider these terms appropriate ethnic identifiers in such circumstances. In interaction with other persons of Latin American origin, however, different group identities may be salient. Thus, the ethnicity of Washingtonians of Latin American origin depends upon the context of interaction, and the level of social and cultural heterogeneity. As noted by J. Milton Yinger

(1986:23):

> One can scarcely act or feel 'primordially' as an Hispanic; but those thus defined administratively may find that they have educational, lingual, economic or political interests that cluster more nearly around the Hispanic identity than around any other.

As the city's multinational Latin American community has grown and become more established in recent years, the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" have become more meaningful in identifying their cultural expressions, social groupings, and political interests (See Chapters 3 and 6). Over time, Latinos have come to identify with each other on many levels as their frames of reference shift from their native countries to the social, cultural and political environment of Washington. Despite their diverse origins, they have many common needs and interests. Although most Latinos have worked hard to improve their economic situation relative to the difficulties they faced in their native countries, education and language barriers have prevented many from establishing a secure economic foundation in Washington. Thus, the danger exists that many will become trapped in the poverty in which most lived when they first arrived (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:115-122; Office on Latino Affairs 1981:3). In the long term, Latinos' ability to improve their economic status depends on whether they, as individuals and as an emerging ethnic minority, can acquire the education and job skills necessary for upward mobility (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:122).

Typology of Ethnic Minorities. John Ogbu (1978:22) argues that because of differences in access to power, wealth and status, it is important to differentiate between three types of minorities: autonomous, immigrant, and caste. Autonomous minorities are culturally distinct segments of a society that are considered the social equals of the majority population. Ogbu cites Jews and Mormons as examples of autonomous minorities in the United States (1978:23). A caste minority is a segment of a population that is considered inferior by the majority population because of race, language, religion, or other characteristics. The prototypical caste minorities are the "pariah" and other scheduled castes of India. In the United States, Ogbu argues that American Indians, blacks, Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans are castelike minorities because they have been relegated to inferior positions in the country's racial stratification system (Ogbu 1978:217-238).

According to Ogbu, persons from the majority segment of society perceive castelike minorities to be categorically ill suited to fill high status positions from which they historically have been excluded. Consequently, castelike minorities may conclude that attempts to achieve in the wider society through the pursuit of formal education would be futile. Both castelike minorities and the majority population tend to develop mutually

reinforcing perceptions of each other as an adaptation to their respective places in the race-based system of social stratification.

Immigrant minorities may be just as poor, if not poorer, than caste minorities, and may be similarly lacking in formal education. Unlike caste minorities, however, immigrants seldom are perceived by the majority population to be inherently inferior. Correspondingly, immigrant minorities may be less likely to believe that others conspire to prevent them from getting ahead in the wider society. Thus, immigrants may be poorer when they first arrive than castelike minorities, but they are more likely to experience upward mobility. According to Ogbu, most Latinos in the United States can be considered castelike minorities. Most Latinos in Washington, however, are new immigrants. Because of their recent emergence in Washington as an ethnic minority, they do not have a history of being discriminated against in any local racial social stratification system. Do Washington Latinos conform to Ogbu's model of an immigrant minority? An autonomous minority? Or are they evolving into a castelike minority at the bottom of a stratification system based on race and ethnicity[8]? Do they have access to good jobs and rewarding careers, or do they feel that their new society is denying them the opportunity to get ahead?

As an emerging ethnic minority, Washington Latinos are at a crossroads. How important are ethnicity and race in understanding their emerging pattern of participation in the society and economy of Washington? Research has shown that minority youths' perceptions of their opportunities to "make it" in the wider society exert a strong influence upon school performance and subsequent career paths (William T. Grant Foundation 1988:19-28; Fine 1986:363-409). How will Latino youths in Washington perceive their chances of entering satisfying careers? Is the younger generation becoming effectively integrated into mainstream social and economic institutions or are they becoming trapped in an urban underclass? The answers to these questions will largely depend on the experiences of the young.

Discontinuities in the Passage from Adolescence to Adulthood

Adolescence is a phase of the human life cycle that implies change and transition. Biologically it is a period in which the human organism matures. The body grows into its adult form and approaches maximum height and physical strength. The human organism also matures sexually, and by late adolescence enters the biologically optimal period for reproduction. Social maturation and biological maturation, however, do not necessarily coincide. Social maturation follows the dictates of culture, not biology. Both the timing and the manner in which the social transition to adulthood occurs varies from society to society and, within societies, from one social context to another. In modern societies, the age at which youths reach puberty has decreased from that of

earlier periods in history. The age at which one is considered capable of assuming adult roles has risen, however, with the expectation for additional years of formal education. In countries such as the United States, the growing gap between physical maturation and social maturity has caused adolescence to be considered a particularly problematic period of life.

This disjuncture is even greater for castelike and immigrant minorities when the primary socialization within the family and ethnic community is markedly different from the secondary socialization in schools controlled by the dominant culture. As will be illustrated below, the behavioral expectations of peers frequently differ from those of the school, sometimes leading to conflictive personal and group identities and ambivalence about the value of educational achievement (Weinreich 1979a; 1979b). Although youths may recognize that their future status in the wider society largely depends on their success in school and subsequent development of a respectable career, a more immediate basis upon which they may evaluate their social status is the esteem of their peers (Ready 1982;1989).

In U.S. society, the greatest acclaim and monetary rewards go to persons who hold jobs that require, at the least, the completion of a bachelors degree. For a variety of reasons, many having to do with poverty, a four-year college education is not feasible for many youths. James Coleman (1974:xiii) is among those who have argued that the United States does not provide sufficient alternative paths for non-college bound youths to legitimately assume respected adult roles in society. Reliance upon school-based academic instruction as the primary means of preparing youth to enter adulthood, tends to denigrate those who, for whatever reason, do not perform well in academic settings. The same youths might, however, excel in other contexts. Unlike some other countries where apprenticeship and vocational instruction provide non-college bound youths with a reliable path to respectable employment (George 1987), much of the vocational instruction in the United States is ineffective, accorded less prestige, and often is not well articulated with the needs of employers (William T. Grant Foundation 1988:50).

"Schulmudigkeit" is a German term, which means "school weary" (Charner and Shore Fraser 1987:63). Youths whom the Germans call "school weary" most likely would be labelled in the United States as being "at-risk" (Berryman 1987:88). In Germany, however, such youths have a respectable and effective alternative path to follow as they progress into adult roles. "School weary" youths are provided with the alternative of participating in a system of apprenticeships combined with vocational training that has been described as providing "a clear, direct, and functional path into careers that is absent in the United States" (Hamilton 1987:327). Frequently lacking such institutionally legitimate alternatives to academic schooling, many American youths, especially minorities living in urban settings, are relegated to working in jobs that hold little prospect of leading to satisfying careers. An even more detrimental alternative is to become involved in more imme-

diately gratifying but illegal activities such as the use and/or sale of drugs (Wilson 1987:39-62). Sue Berryman comments on the educational decision making of "school weary" youths in the United States:

> I suggest that the process by which school weariness emerges has to do with the student's vision of his or her place in the adult world. All children develop an image of their future niche in the world -- in the ecological sense of niche. Their ideas about the ecology of adult "places" may be distorted and may be pathetically partial. However, they seem to work out notions of their basic futures and of the trajectories relevant to them, even if they cannot state them explicitly. And they act on these ideas... (Berryman 1987:88)

On what trajectories do Latino youths in Washington perceive themselves to be travelling? The answer to this question is tied to the youths' perceptions of where they have come from, evaluations of their current circumstances, and their expectations about the outcomes of alternative courses of action. These perceptions, in turn, are related to the effectiveness of schools, community organizations, and informal networks of family and friends in linking youths to opportunities in the wider society. The image that young people develop of their place in society consciously or unconsciously influences the choices they make about their education and future employment. Understanding how these perceptions are formed among youths of different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds is fundamental to the success of efforts to eliminate or prevent poverty.

In a recent study of high school students in Washington, Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu (1987:182) described some Afro-American youths as having developed an "oppositional identity." As Afro-Americans historically have been excluded from holding better jobs from the primary labor market, ones they describe as being above a "job ceiling" imposed by whites (1987:179), many adjusted their understandings of their present and future places in society (their trajectories) accordingly. One manifestation of this was that good academic performance in high school was associated with "acting white." Succeeding in school and in the predominant economic and social institutions of society was perceived as requiring the denial of one's primary identity as black, or Afro-American. A self-defeating pattern emerged in which prestige within the youth subculture of many black high school students was associated with actions that were inconsistent with academic achievement and the likelihood of developing a legitimate, rewarding career.

Referring to the deteriorating employment status of minority youths despite improvements in high school completion rates, a recent report on at-risk American youths asked the rhetorical question:

> Is it surprising that a savvy tenth grader, observing the experience of his older brothers and friends, should wonder what sense it makes for him to buy into the goal of school completion if he will face the same disappointing prospects after graduation (Charner and Shore Fraser 1987:17)?

Is the same or a similar process occurring with Latino youths in Washington? Do many Latino youths evaluate their status in terms of peer-based activities that are inconsistent with succeeding in school? Do Latinos sometimes come to the conclusion that academic success implies the denial of their ethnic identity? Given that both Latinos and Afro-Americans in Washington have high drop-out rates and high rates of poverty, can it then be assumed that the same social and cultural processes described by Ogbu and Fordham for Afro-American youths take place among young Latinos, people, as well? If the processes are different despite similarly high rates of poverty and a high rate of school leaving, what are the implications for policy makers interested in addressing the needs of Latinos? To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine Latinos youths' perceptions of their "trajectories" (Berryman 1987:88). How do they evaluate their current status in relation to where have they come from and their outlook for the future? Are schools able to avoid forcing Latino youths to abandon their primary ethic identities as they go about learning the lessons that are necessary for them to effectively participate in the wider society? These questions will be addressed as we examine the progression from adolescence to adulthood of the Latino participants in this study during the 1980s.

The Crossroads Study

Initial contact with the study population was made in 1982 during a research project focussed on the mental health and psychosocial adaptation of Latino and other immigrant students at the Multicultural Career Intern Program (MCIP). MCIP is a Washington, D.C. high school that had recently been founded to serve the city's rapidly growing population of at-risk Latino and other immigrant youths. In 1982, 250 MCIP students completed survey questionnaires that asked about migration, demographic characteristics, and mental health status. In addition, 15% of the students were interviewed, about their lives before leaving home, their reasons for migrating, and their initial experiences in adjusting to life in the United States. Information also was collected through the writer's participant observation as a volunteer teacher at the school[9].

The Crossroads Study was begun in 1988 with the objective of documenting influences upon the educational and employment experiences of Latino participants from the previous study during the past six years. An attempt was made to locate and interview as

many as possible of the 181 Latino youths who were first contacted in 1982. Of the 146 who were still residing in the Washington area, 112 (77%) were located and agreed to interviews which were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on the preference of the informant[10]. The interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to three hours and took place in the informants' homes or some other location in their communities. The 112 interviews are the primary source of data for this report. In addition, collateral data regarding place of residence, education, domestic status, and employment were gathered from relatives, friends and former teachers for most of the remaining members of the study population who could not be interviewed.

Information on current place of residence was gathered for 95% of the 181 members of the study population. Reliable information about graduation from MCIP, and other schools, and about persons who received a GED, was obtained for 99% of the 146 Washington area residents, and 91% of the total. Information about post-secondary education was gathered for 88% of Washington area residents and 76% of the total. Marital status and fertility data were obtained for 90% of Washington area residents and 77% of the total. The 1988 employment status of 93% of Washington area residents and 82% of the total population was ascertained.

This report focusses on the post-secondary educational and employment experiences of the young Latinos who participated in the 1982 study. In Chapter 1, concepts, theories, and background information pertinent to understanding the risk of persistent poverty confronting young Latinos in Washington were presented. Chapter 2 goes back in time to the early 1980s to examine the reasons why study participants left their countries and came to Washington. It also discusses their immediate post-arrival experiences, findings from the 1982 study regarding early psychosocial adjustment, and describes their entry into the educational system and the job market. In Chapter 3, the focus shifts to "Growing up in Washington." This chapter reviews challenges study participants faced during adolescence and the community resources that were available to assist them. Some of the challenges, such as having to learn a new language and adjusting to life in a foreign country, are attributable to their status as newcomers to Washington. Others were similar to those facing native born low income minority youths living in the inner city.

Chapter 4 examines educational attainment and the many factors influencing the successes and failures experienced by study participants. In Chapter 5, the focus shifts to employment, including the types of jobs held by informants in 1988 and the social, cultural and institutional factors that affected their careers. The final chapter offers a summary, and assesses the degree of success that these young Latinos have had in sharing in the prosperity of the city and in entering satisfying careers. Obstacles impeding their progress are reviewed, as are factors that were helpful in assisting them to avoid becoming trapped in the poverty in which most lived as teenagers when they first

arrived in Washington. Last, the implications of this study for understanding and ameliorating the problems of other youths who are at-risk of becoming trapped in poverty are discussed.

Chapter 2

Passages to Washington

Migration and Demographic Change in Washington

Washington, D.C. is a dynamic city, a city of contrasts and of paradoxes. As the seat of government, it attracts the rich and powerful. Countries from around the world send to the city some of their most influential and respected citizens to represent them in matters of diplomacy and trade. The city also attracts the poor and disadvantaged who come in search of opportunity. "Official Washington" is largely populated by politicians, diplomats and lobbyists. Alongside "Official Washington," however, is the rest of the city which stands in marked contrast. The wealth and power of Washington are by no means evenly distributed among the various segments of the population. Washington also is a place where 31% of the city's children grow up in poverty (Grier and Grier 1988:6).

Part of the dynamism of Washington is reflected in the shifting composition of its population over time. Although relatively stable for the first 140 years of its history, the past several decades have brought enormous changes in both the size and ethnic makeup of its population. Commencing with the expansion of the federal government associated with Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and with the advent of World War II, Washington began its transformation from "a sleepy southern town" to a rapidly growing metropolis and world capital. At its founding in 1800, 71% of the city's inhabitants were white and 29% black. Most of the black inhabitants of the city in 1800 were slaves (Green 1967:33). In 1940, the proportion of black and white inhabitants was virtually the same as in 1800 (Green 1967:200). Beginning in the 1940s, however, the percentage of blacks in the city began to rise rapidly until 1970, when 72% of the population was reported by the U.S. Census to be black and only 28% white. Both blacks and whites flocked to the city in the post-war era to participate in Washington's economic expansion. By the late 1950s, however, whites increasingly were moving to the suburbs, and in the 1960s, Washington became a predominantly black city.

Although metropolitan Washington has continued to grow, the population of the District of Columbia, itself, declined from a peak of 756,510 in 1970 to 628,000 in 1986 (Bureau of the Census 1983; Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments 1986). Many of the people leaving the city in recent years have been persons of middle and high income, both black and white, who were choosing to live in the suburbs (Greater Washington Research Center 1988:35). As a result, the contrast between affluent "official Washington" and the rest of the city became more and more pronounced. Not only has the percentage of persons living in poverty in the District risen, but so has the absolute number of poor

persons -- this despite a decline in the total population of the city (Committee on Strategies to Reduce Chronic Poverty 1988:5). In the mid-1980s, the population of the District of Columbia constituted only 20% of the three million inhabitants of metropolitan Washington. Fifty percent of all persons living in poverty in the metropolitan area, however, were D.C. residents (Maxwell 1985:5). Although by any standard, Washington is very prosperous, the cost of living, especially for housing, is very high. In an environment of general prosperity, the concentration of a growing number of poor people in the District, many trapped in long term poverty, is both a problem and a paradox.

Migration from Latin America

Beginning in the 1960s and early seventies, there emerged in this city of stark contrasts a new element of the population: newcomers from around the world. In the late 1970s, Washington began experiencing for the first time a large influx of international migrants, particularly from Central and South America and the Caribbean (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:21). Around 1980, the pace of migration from Central America, particularly El Salvador, increased dramatically (Inda:1981:5). According to the 1980 census, 17,777 persons of Hispanic origin were living in the city, although this figure probably is lower than the actual number of Spanish-speaking residents of the city at that time. Others calculate that the Spanish-speaking population of the city in 1980 was between 35,000 and 50,000 (Office on Latino Affairs, 1981:3). Estimates of the Latino population in the District in 1988 vary widely, from as high as 100,000 to more conservative estimates of 70,000, or 11% of the total population of the District (El-Hehiawy and Smith-Hawkins 1986:29). Whichever number is correct, it is clear that the number of persons of Latin American origin has grown from a small segment of the total population in the early 1970s to a major component in the 1980s. Despite the widely varying population estimates, it is believed that approximately one-third of the Latino population of the metropolitan area reside in the District of Columbia (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:19; Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs 1981:1).

The Latin Americans who have been migrating to Washington for over 25 years, have came for a variety of reasons. In the 1970s, most of the newcomers hoped to improve their economic circumstances. Some came to join other members of their families who already were here. Still others came for the purpose of furthering their education. Most came because of a combination of these reasons. Well over half of the adult migrants were women (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:25), many of whom already had started families. In the many cases in which the woman was the first member of the family to arrive, she frequently left her children behind to be cared for by others.

The women found work as domestics and clerical workers, in cleaning and sewing, and as kitchen workers. Men found construc-

tion and maintenance jobs (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:36). Some of the jobs were arranged prior to arrival in Washington, especially when women were employed as domestic workers. Newcomers who arrived without prearranged employment, typically relied upon relatives who already were here for help in finding work, as well as for food and shelter until employment could be secured (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:78). In this manner, the Latino population of Washington grew slowly but steadily in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the 1980s, however, with the escalation of civil strife in El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America, the trickle of Latin newcomers turned into a powerful and steadily flowing stream. The chain migration of the 1960s and 1970s already had led to the establishment of a multinational Latino community in Washington, which was numerically dominated by Central Americans, especially Salvadoreans. By 1988, the Latino community had become so established that nearly all study participants said they had at least one other relative living in the Washington area.

Most of the Latino newcomers were poor when they arrived (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:98; Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs 1981:2). They found a city where housing and food were expensive and where a large percentage of the population already was living in poverty. They also found, however, a city of promise and opportunity. Most were young -- adolescents and young adults, some with young children (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:25). Some were educated urban professionals, but far more were rural peasants and laborers with little formal education (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:33). Most arrived with little knowledge of English and lacking the education or training usually considered essential for finding a good job (Singh, McGivern & D'Emelio 1981:44). Nonetheless, they brought with them the desire to improve their circumstances and a willingness to work hard for little money (by U.S. standards) in order to do so (Cohen 1979:247). Like migrants elsewhere, the fact that they uprooted themselves from their homelands and moved to a foreign country with an unfamiliar language and culture demonstrates a high degree of independence and initiative (Butterworth and Chance 1981:62).

Characteristics of the Study Population

Migration Information. Ninety-three percent of the 181 Latinos study participants arrived in Washington in 1980 or later. Seventy-three percent came from Central America. Salvadoreans comprised 77% of the Central Americans and 54% of all study participants. The only country outside of Central America represented by more than four persons was the Dominican Republic, from which 10% of the study participants came. The remaining 17% came from 14 other Latin American countries.

Table 1 -- Country of Origin

	N	(%)
El Salvador	98	54%
Dominican Republic	19	10%
Guatemala	18	10%
Nicaragua	8	4%
Panama	4	3%
Honduras	3	2%
Other*	31	17%
	181	100%

* Less than 2% of the study population came from each of 14 other Latin American countries.

When responding to a survey question during the 1982-83 study as to why they had left their native countries, most study participants simply stated one or both of their parents sent for them or brought them to Washington. Nonetheless, 44% specifically mentioned warfare or threats of violence as a reason for leaving. In interviews conducted shortly thereafter, many youths who made no mention of threats of violence or warfare on their survey forms did so verbally. In response to another survey question asking whether they would like to return to live in their countries someday, 85% responded affirmatively. Many from El Salvador added comments such as, "when the difficult situation that my country is going through is over." In 1988, 81% (146/181) of the original study population were still living in the Washington area. Only 12 (7%) had returned to their native countries. Eleven (6%) lived elsewhere in the United States. The whereabouts of 9 (5%) could not be determined. Three were deceased.

Age and Sex. Fifty-two percent of the study population is male and 48% female. The average age of study participants when first contacted during the 1982-83 study was 17.5 years, slightly older than most students in U.S. high schools. Many had been out of school for some time because of disruptions caused by violence in their native countries.

Parental Education. Like most other Latino newcomers to Washington, most study participants were from families of modest socioeconomic status. Fifty-one percent indicated during the 1982-83 study that neither of their parents had completed as much as 12 years of school. Only 10% indicated that either parent had received more than 12 years of schooling.

Paternal Employment. The 1982-83 survey also asked about the occupations of respondents' fathers in their native countries. Of the 118 students who responded, 25% indicated that their fathers were involved in agriculture, mostly as peasant farmers; that is, they produced food for their own families and sold an additional portion in order to purchase household goods. Of the 56 persons who responded to a question regarding paternal employment in Washington, most indicated that their fathers worked in construction (13), as busboys (6), chefs (7), or in building maintenance (7). None were involved in business, and only 8 worked as professionals or para-professionals. While 65% of study participants responded to the question about their father's employment prior to emigrating, only 31% stated their father's employment in Washington. It was learned through interviews that in most cases in which informants did not respond to questions about parental employment, the reason was that the parent was not present or was not a member of the same household in which the informant lived.

Table 2 -- Highest Level of Education Completed by Either Parent

Years of Schooling	N	(%)
< 6 Years	49	30%
7 to 11 Years	34	21%
12 Years or Completion of High School	63	39%
More than 12 Years	17	10%
	163	100%

Maternal Employment. The 1982-83 survey revealed that 40% of the youths' mothers were housewives in their native countries. Only 6% listed "housewife" as the occupation of their mothers in Washington, however. None of the mothers were involved in business in Washington, although 10% were so involved prior to migrating, mostly as retail merchants who sold food or other goods from "puestos" (stands) in local markets. Nearly half (47) of 98 study participants who responded to the question about maternal employment in Washington indicated that their mothers were domestic

workers; 14 were employed in commercial cleaning. Seventy-five percent of the study population responded to the question regarding maternal employment in country of origin compared to only 54% in Washington. As with paternal employment, failure to respond to questions regarding maternal employment usually indicated that the informant did not live with his or her mother. The predominant reason why the informant did not live with his or her mother in the native country was that the mother already had moved to Washington in order to work.

Table 3 -- Paternal Employment in Country of Origin and in Washington

Occupation	Native Country		Washington	
	N	%	N	%
Agriculture	29	25%	0	0%
Non-Agricultural Labor	33	28%	39	68%
Service	15	13%	10	18%
Professional or Para-Professional	24	20%	8	14%
Business	17	4%	0	0%
	118	100%	57	100%

Table 4 -- Maternal Employment in Country of Origin and in Washington

Occupation	Native Country		Washington	
	N	%	N	%
Agriculture	9	7%	0	0%
Non-Agricultural Labor	22	16%	79	81%
Service	19	14%	9	9%
Professional or Para-Professional	18	13%	4	4%
Business	13	10%	0	0%
Housewife	54	40%	6	6%
	135	100%	98	100%

Challenges of Migration and Early Resettlement

As the case studies presented below illustrate, study participants and their families decided to leave their countries for a variety of reasons. For most, civil warfare and related economic and social dislocation were important factors. Many teenage boys feared that they would be drawn into military conflict. Others who were not directly threatened by warfare left because they were unable to continue their education because their schools had been blown up or teachers assassinated. Unable to continue their education, and with the economies of their native countries in depression, many of these youths and their families concluded that their prospects for the future at home were bleak. As tensions became more acute in El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America in 1980, and with a predominantly Salvadorean Latino community already in place in Washington, tens of thousands left their homes and began migrating to the city.

Ninety-three percent of the youths in this study arrived in Washington between 1980 and 1982. During their first years in the city, most lived in households with incomes below the poverty line. Many lived with cousins, aunts, uncles, friends, and sometimes, alone. As teenagers, most were at least partially responsible for supporting themselves. Few families migrated to Washington intact. The move north frequently led to the rearrangement of families, as parents who separated before or at the time of emigration divorced and remarried, and children who had been raised by aunts and grandmothers eventually were reunited with their mothers or other relatives in Washington. Friction associated with the restructuring of families was an additional problem that some study participants had to face.

Case Studies. The migration stories presented below illustrate the range of reasons why youths and their families chose to leave their countries. They also describe the experiences of informants and their families as they resettled in Washington. As illustrated by the case of Felipe Maldonado, many of the youths who left their homes in Central America as teenagers were forced to grow up quickly. Below, Felipe describes the problems he faced as a boy in rural El Salvador and the challenges that confronted him upon his arrival in Washington.

Felipe Maldonado. Felipe is one of eight children in the Maldonado family. His father, Vicente, was an illiterate peasant farmer who supported his household by growing the beans and corn that were the staple of his family's diet. In 1979, at the age of 14, Felipe had been out of school for three years. The school that he had attended had been blown up by a bomb. As war related violence intensified around their home, Vicente urged his son to leave to try to find a safer place to live. Felipe's older sister, Marta, already had left and was living in Houston.

I was out of school for three years down there before I

came to Washington. The school was bombed so there was no school. The school was in a small town but I grew up in a place that was even smaller, called Huetamo. There were like 200 families in a very small area. El Salvador is so small. We are everywhere we can be. The only place that is not crowded is where they grow the coffee and the cotton -- where all the wealthy people are. They have all the room they want.

My father was a farmer. He used to work about seven or eight acres. Mostly he planted beans and corn, and some watermelon.... The way that we managed it -- to have eight kids and [only my father] working -- was to sell some of the beans and corn at the end of the year. We would keep the [food that] we needed for that year and sell the rest to buy stuff for the house... We were poor, but my dad never believed in working for somebody else.

[Back then] I never really thought about coming to the U.S. All I wanted to do was to get out of the country to a peaceful place. I was a young person and a male, and they put all kinds of different threats on me. I wasn't really concerned about being drafted by the guerrillas because I had a little bit more understanding of what was going on in my area with the people. I was more concerned about the army drafting me. I had friends who were with the guerrillas. I knew that unless I wanted to join them there was no pressure to join them. Where I lived it was very clear that the guerrillas were growing by tens and hundreds -- so they weren't pressuring anybody. If you joined them, you did it because you believed strongly in what they were doing. There was no salary. There were no benefits. The only thing that was waiting for you was hard work and fighting. There were so many people who wanted to be fighters. Some were frustrated because they killed their parents or something, and so they wanted to just pick up a rifle and kill soldiers. But what the guerrillas wanted were people who would respond with a politically oriented fighting force -- not just, 'I'll give you a gun and you go, *bam bam bam* and kill soldiers.'

Basically, I don't think anybody wanted to leave El Salvador or come to the U.S. in the first place. Maybe 5% wanted to get out and go to the U.S., but with the situation that we were being put in at that time, I would say that the majority of the people decided they had to leave. Maybe not to the U.S., maybe just to any other place. Like, first of all, I went to Mexico. I stayed about 3 months in Mexico City. There wasn't hardly anything there at all. I used all the money

there that I brought from home. My sister who was living in Houston sent me money down there. There was no life for me in Mexico. It was like a dead end. I was on my own so I needed to work. That is why I left Mexico and came here. If the war hadn't started, maybe I would have come to the U.S. to visit someday or something like that, but not to stay. You are so used to your homeland, it is very hard to leave.

There are so many immigrants here like me who came because of the war. It's not that everyone was persecuted. It doesn't matter whether you were involved or not involved. The truth of the matter is that anytime anybody could start shooting on the street and you could be caught in the cross fire. This was my biggest nightmare because I saw these things happen. This group started opening fire against the police and the police started firing back. Everything went crazy. And then the police come back and they just go after anybody who looks suspicious. So you see, you don't have to be involved in anything political. The U.S. should at least provide amnesty to people trying to get out of a country in war.

Question: You must have felt like a fish out of water when you first came to Washington -- not speaking English and not knowing anybody but this former priest.

Exactly. It was a shock. I left Houston because there was no work. So I came up here to Washington and I met this guy. He said, 'I am living in a very cozy apartment with one kid and my wife but I know these people who are trying to help Salvadoreans, Central Americans, anybody who is coming from a country that is in conflict...' They wanted to take people who left because of the war situation, but not people who came here just because they wanted to make money. Well, I wasn't working back there. I didn't come here to look for work either -- but I did have to find a way to live.

For three years I was out of school. I perfected my skills playing soccer. That's all I did -- play soccer and do things around the house and help my daddy. Maybe I would go to work in the fields for like two hours and come back home. But my daddy didn't want me to hang around our house in the first place. He wanted me to keep going to school. We had so many fights back then. I wanted to keep going to school but that's the time you need all your friends, and all my friends decided not to go to school because they were afraid. I wasn't *that* afraid -- really afraid to go to school, but everybody else was. So it was just me, and to go

to a new school at that time would have been very hard. So my daddy and I finally decided that the best thing for me was to just get out of the country, and find some peaceful place where I might have a future.

When I first got to Washington I really needed help. The people that I was staying with took me as a refugee. The situation was that I could stay with them for 2 months after I got a job. Then I would move to my own apartment. But when the situation came up, I talked with them, and I didn't know anybody I could share an apartment with. I found a job the third day after I got here. But with my income, there was no way I could support myself in an apartment. So I needed more time before I could find my own place. I asked them if they knew of someone who could help. They said 'yes.' They told me about this house[1]. [When I got there, those people] wanted me to become a member of it. It was formed by a married couple and their three year old daughter, and two other single guys, Frank and Eddie. It was a big house. What they do in this house is try to help people as they come up from El Salvador. Frank speaks Spanish, but there is so much slang that we Salvadoreans speak and there already were two other Salvadoreans staying there. They said to me, 'I noticed that you are very helpful to these other people here.'

Some of these people are really down when they come up from El Salvador. One of the problems that they have is with drinking. So I tried to educate them and find out why they were drinking. I got very involved with their lives trying to help them out. Frank and Eddie told me that this is what they did -- try to help people out. So they asked me, 'Why don't you stay with us?' So that's how I got involved with the house. Once I became a member, I kept my work and paid my rent and my food and everything.

I started going to the Gordon Center [public adult education center] to learn English. After I was there for about three months my teacher said, 'You're wasting your time here. You have so much potential. You should be going to high school.' We started talking about it. She explained to me what high school is, because it didn't mean anything to me. [She told me] that it is tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade. I hadn't even finished the 8th grade, so how could I go to high school? She told me that didn't matter because I was an adult... So the teacher is the one who recommended that I go to high school. She sent me to the MCIP.

Question: Did you find it difficult?

No, it was relatively easy. They gave me the test and I passed it. It was easy because the people I was living with wanted me to go to school. I was working both days and some nights. But I got enrolled.

Question: Do you think that most other Salvadorean kids your age went to high school here?

No, I think I was in a minority. But the thing is, all the people who had come up here that I met at that school had a job at the same time.

Felipe never finished high school but later got his high school equivalency certificate (GED). He married a U.S. citizen whom he met through his work helping other Salvadoreans. He also completed a training program in electronics repair provided by the District of Columbia Public Schools. After an initial phase in which he could not find an electronics job that paid him well, he eventually found a good job with the assistance of friends of his former house mates who were involved in professional video productions.

The Garza Family. Like Felipe Maldonado, Jorge, Edgar and Delmy Garza arrived in Washington in 1980. Unlike Felipe, however, the Garzas were from the capital city of San Salvador where, at least at one time, they had been moderately affluent. The father, Miguel, was a successful businessman, and the mother, Ana, a nurse. In 1974, Miguel and Ana separated and Ana was left to raise four children alone. With her salary as a nurse, Ana could not support her children in a way that she considered satisfactory. When she learned of an opportunity to work in Washington as a domestic housekeeper, Ana quickly arranged for others to care for the children and, in 1975, left El Salvador for the United States. According to her plan, the children would come to join her in Washington as soon as she became settled and found a better job. When Ana left for the United States, Jorge, Edgar and Delmy were separated and sent to live with different families.

After five years in Washington, Ana had been unable to find better employment. By then, however, conditions in El Salvador had deteriorated so much that she could wait no longer to retrieve her children. When she returned, her oldest daughter, Cristina, already had married and did not wish to leave. At 20 years of age, Jorge was the second oldest and had been supporting himself for two years by painting automobiles. He did not want to leave the country either. Ana insisted, however, that Jorge return with her to the United States along with his younger brother and sister.

In 1988, Jorge recalled his reluctance to leave El Salvador in 1980 when his mother arrived to retrieve him and his siblings.

I felt totally frustrated because in my country I relied

completely upon myself. My mother was the only one who ever took care of us, and she left for the United States in 1975. We were left to stay with different families. Cristina got married, Edgar stayed with one family, Delmy with another, and I went off to stay with a friend. We raised ourselves with different people. Because of this, when we came to the United States, things were pretty bad. Our minds were all distorted and we couldn't concentrate on anything. Maybe it was the change in cultures, coming to Washington, the division of the family -- or maybe all of those things. Our family, well, we hadn't been raised by our parents. The culture also was completely different. It was different economically too. What I mean is that we came here with practically nothing -- broke.

The situation in El Salvador was getting really bad. The war was going strong and you could see signs of it everywhere. In 1980 I was in the second year of the baccalaureate (11th grade) studying commerce. We couldn't finish the school year because in June or July they killed two teachers in my school. They had to close it down for a while. Then in September they were about to re-open it when they returned and killed a third teacher. So they had to shut the school down completely. They don't know who the assassins were--if it was the 'mano blanco'[2] or the government. But, of course, those of us who were around the school know pretty much who was doing the killing.

Thank God that in 1980, the same year that they closed the school, my mother came to get us. She came at the end of the summer and started to arrange for our visas. I didn't want to go [to the U.S.]. I was 20 years old; I was used to the system. I was acclimated to the way things were, to the people, to everything. I had my job, which was painting cars, and I was studying at night. In other words, I thought I was pretty well set.

Question: What was the neighborhood like where you were living?

It was the worst, most notorious street in town! There were thieves, criminals (laughs) -- but if you didn't mess with them, they left you alone. After a while they got to know me and would say, 'Hola, ¿Como estás?' (Hi, How are you?) -- so they would leave me alone.

We left El Salvador in October and arrived here in Washington. When we first got here, we stayed at Casa Santa Maria, which was a place only for women (laughs)!

They didn't allow any men. It was run by the Centro Catolico. There we spent 6 months. Later, we went to live in a basement with some friends. There were like 12 of us (laughs)! If we wanted to watch something on television we couldn't because the owner would shut it off, get angry and scream. It was really bad. We were all living together. Later, we went to live in a condominium. I don't know what the problem was but after a while they threw us out onto the street. That's when we really didn't know what to do. But it seems that there always is someone who is there to help you when you need it.

[After arriving in Washington] I felt lost, completely lost. I had no friends, nobody to talk to. It was a very difficult thing. I cried and was very lonely. When I began to go to school in January [1981], I wanted to go back to my country immediately. I would tell my mother. 'I'm leaving! I'm leaving! I'm leaving!' She would tell me, 'No, be patient. I'm working so that you can go to school.' She worked as a housekeeper--cleaning houses and taking care of children.

I do not know, and I cannot explain, how my mother was able to do it. She earned no more than $270 a week. For housing we paid $650 or $700 and the increases kept on coming. I do not know how she was able to support us for three years -- no, four years. After high school I did one year of vocational school. So for four years she was the only one who was working. I worked part time at night, but what I made I wasted drinking. In those days I wasn't thinking like an adult. My poor mother -- I'm sure she knew. She understood how it was going to be when she brought us here from our country. She knew that I already had a drinking problem.

Later, with the help of counsellors from MCIP and the influence of his family, Jorge was able to control his problem drinking. While in high school, Jorge was placed in an internship where he observed and assisted dental technicians making dentures. Since he enjoyed working with his hands, he quickly decided that this was the career that he wanted to pursue. In 1988, Jorge was married and the father of two children. After struggling for a few years, he believed that he was finally making good progress in his chosen career as a dental technician.

In 1988, Jorge's sister, Delmy, was in her second year of nursing school. She supported herself by working as a medical assistant, a job for which she received training after graduating from MCIP. Edgar had completed a two-year associate degree program as medical technician and was working in a local hospital. He also was continuing with his studies while he worked. His ultimate goal was to become a lawyer and, one day, to enter politics. The

Jorge, Edgar and Delmy Garza were among the most successful study participants in terms of their educational achievements. How they were able to overcome the difficulties they faced upon their arrival in Washington will be discussed in later chapters. In 1988, Edgar had this to say as he reflected on the difficulties that he and his family had faced:

> I really feel proud of myself knowing that I came here with nothing, being nobody. We used to live in this little room with my brother and sister and my mother like we were nobodies. But my mother had a dream for us to become somebody someday. Up until now she is proud of us. We are a family that has stuck together. That is what we have. That is what has helped us a lot.

Sandra Serrano. Not all of the migration stories of Washington's Latino youths are as dramatic as those of Felipe Maldonado or the Garza family. Sandra Serrano came to Washington from the Dominican Republic in 1982 when she was 17 years old. Her mother, Isabel, had come seven years earlier to take a job as a live-in housekeeper. At that time, Sandra and her three younger brothers began living with their grandmother. For five years, Sandra's father, Saul, also remained in the Dominican Republic where he worked in a sugar mill. In 1980, Saul joined Isabel in Washington and soon found a job as a hospital orderly. Neither of Sandra's parents had more than a few years of schooling.

Sandra was the first of the Serrano children to come to the United States. Her three younger brothers joined her and her parents in 1983. Before leaving the Dominican Republic, Sandra had only completed the seventh grade. When she arrived in Washington, she immediately enrolled in an adult education program to learn English. She resisted a counsellor's suggestion that she try to earn a GED because she thought that it would not be as good as a high school diploma. Soon a friend advised her to enroll at a school called MCIP where she was admitted as a tenth grader.

Sandra graduated from MCIP in 1984 and began to work as a salesperson at a major department store. The following year, she decided that she wanted to go into banking and took a course at a trade school that prepared her for her job as a teller, which she began in 1986. When interviewed in 1988, Sandra had just been promoted by the bank to "New Accounts Representative." Although her salary still was low, she was very happy with her job because it provided good benefits and held the promise of developing into a satisfying career. The bank even paid for her college tuition so she could pursue a degree in business administration.

Sandra expressed no regrets that her mother had left her at the age of ten. She was glad that she had come to the United States because there were so many opportunities to get an education. Sandra's ultimate goal was to save enough money to return to the Dominican Republic to start her own business. In marked

contrast to the experiences of Felipe Maldonado and the Garzas, Sandra stated that it was not difficult for her to make the transition to living in Washington. "It was not a problem for me. I didn't have to work and I didn't have any responsibilities. I could just be a student, full time."

Marcos Morales. Like many study participants, Marcos Morales had to overcome several serious problems before and during his journey northward, and as he began to settle in Washington. Not the least of these involved obtaining documentation as a legal resident of the United States. Although the difficulties he had to confront were especially severe, his story illustrates how being an undocumented alien made coping with other challenges commonly faced by urban youths that much more difficult.

Marcos was from a provincial capital in El Salvador. His father was a government official and his mother a school principal. The violence of El Salvador's civil war affected the Morales family in a very direct way.

Question: What sort of work did your parents do back in El Salvador?

> Well, my mother was the principal of a school, and my father... was working for the government court over at San Pedro. Then things got a little bit complicated. Someone put a bomb under my father's desk and tried to kill him. It exploded when he wasn't there, so it didn't hurt him. But it was pretty obvious that somebody wanted him out. And by that time (1981), they also were going after the teachers -- killing the teachers. They killed some of the friends of my mother. 1981 in El Salvador was one of the worst times. That was when the death squads were really hitting. You might meet someone one day and then you might not see him again, because the next day he'll be disappeared. That's the kind of situation it was.
>
> My parents, my brother, my sister and her family, and I all left at the same time. My sister was already married so she came with her husband. We all left together, but my parents and my little brother went on to Canada. I had to stay in Mexico for a while. [All of us] were supposed to pick up our [Canadian] visas in Mexico City, but unfortunately they denied it to me. We were left there in Mexico, while my father and my mother went over to Canada. My sister's visa and my visa were denied. My parents had a labor contract. They included us on the contract, but didn't write our names in until later. The Canadians said that they couldn't provide the visa for us at that moment, and that only my parents could go.

[My parents] lived in Toronto for about a year and my brother, sister and I stayed with my uncle in Guadalajara until we could get the visa. We were all the time going back to Mexico City, the capital. We used to go like twice a month to try and see what was going on with the visa. We did that for almost a year and nothing happened. So my parents decided that the only way for us to get together was to come over here to this city [Washington]. My father had visited here before and knew a woman living here who he used to work for. He got in touch with her and settled things. So that's how we came to Washington. I got here in 1981. What we did was we crossed the border illegally from Mexico to Brownsville [Texas]. Unfortunately or fortunately, we were caught as illegals.

When we were caught, they put a fine on everyone of us that we had to pay. That was around $20,000 or $25,000. We had to pay for my sister's husband and their little kid, too. They gave us 30 days to show up in court. That's when my parents filed for political asylum. We thought we had a strong case because of the bomb, but I had to stay in jail near Brownsville for about a month and a half. I was only 14 or 15 back then, and they put me in jail with a bunch of criminals. I mean, it was a penitentiary! My sister, since she was 18, was put in a 'correlón.' The 'correlón' is a place where all illegals are held. Since I was a minor they thought it was better to isolate me, so that's why they put me in a prison cell. I mean, because I was a minor, I had no contact with anyone. After our application for asylum was accepted, they let us go and we left from Texas and came up here to Washington. Then we started working, trying to pay the debt, and I started school....

The first job I had was fixing the house of the lady that my mother worked for as a housekeeper. My parents lived there [in that house]. I was staying with some other people in Maryland. After that [job], I did janitorial work. We had to work a long time to pay the fine, even though they only made us pay a percentage of it. We finally paid it off in 1986.

Question: Was your father ever granted asylum?

No. He was denied the asylum. The judge said that he needed more proof. We had affidavits from the Salvadorean government saying that it was true about the bomb. The affidavits said that my father used to work for the government and that a bomb was placed intentionally to kill him. I mean, what more proof is there than an affidavit and pictures of the place from the newspaper?

I mean, everything was very, very...

They denied the asylum application in 1983, the year I graduated [from MCIP]. Meanwhile, my mother was trying to get the green card through her work. The family that owned the house she took care of was trying to help. Unfortunately she couldn't get the papers either. A school principal [doing] cleaning! It was hell for my mother. I hated seeing my mother and father, who used to have desk jobs, who used to wear nice clothes, just cleaning messes for somebody else! And then they still denied them the opportunity to try and make it in life. When I think about that -- I mean, I feel a kind of hate inside me because it is ridiculous. I mean, it's stupid.

Question: But when the new immigration law was passed, you could get amnesty anyway, no?

The rest of the family did, but I couldn't. That's what I'm saying, I'm like slipping, destroying myself. I got my life so screwed up that I don't know what I'm going to do. While I was going through all these kinds of problems with immigration and everything -- well-- I began to just rely on, you know, leisure time. I got into drinking, fooling around. I mean, I just tried to -- not avoid reality -- but not to be suffering all the time thinking about it. So, you know, I used to fool around. And sometimes you don't know how far to push it. Unfortunately I got into some problems with the police -- I was charged with assault with a dangerous weapon. But I think I was screwed there too, because ... what I did was self defense. I never even had a record before. They convicted me of a felony, and that automatically disqualified me for the amnesty.

By that time (1987), I was engaged to be married. I never expected to go through all this. We've had to put off the date for the wedding. I don't have amnesty, and now they've sent me the notice saying that they are going to deport me. I've filed an appeal, so right now I'm just waiting. I mean, I am engaged and we were going to be married October the 15th. If I get married and they deport me, I would have to leave the country. She could come with me, but where? Where am I going? There is no place....

Marcos' believed that his and his family's immigration problems had made him bitter, and that this contributed to his developing bad habits that eventually could lead to his deportation. Although few informants faced problems as severe as those of Marcos, many other de facto refugees also had to cope with the

insecurity of being an undocumented alien.

Migration as Opportunity and Adaptive Challenge

Many Latino youths in Washington such as Marcos, Felipe and Jorge Garza, did not wish to leave their homes, but they or their parents reached the conclusion that remaining in their native countries had become too dangerous. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the vast majority of study participants indicated shortly after they arrived in 1982 and 1983 that they hoped one day to return to live in their native countries. By 1988, only 7% had returned home. Most had come to the conclusion that their futures lie in Washington. As they settled in, they recognized the opportunities around them and, like Sandra Serrano, were eager to go to school and work hard to get ahead --this, despite the fact that during the critical transition from adolescence to adulthood, many remained undocumented.

In later chapters, more information will be presented illustrating how immigration related problems continued to impede the efforts of these youths to obtain an education and to develop a career. Indeed, from the time of their arrival in the early 1980s to 1988, immigration problems were the single most serious impediment facing study participants as they struggled to avoid becoming trapped in the poverty in which most lived when they first arrived. In addition, other migration related problems affecting their capacity to successfully respond to the formidable challenges of living in a new society were: (a) traumas experienced prior to departure or during the migration; (b) the effect of migration upon the youth's family; and (c) the absence of friends and relatives to provide emotional support.

Trauma Prior to and During Migration. Many youths had to cope with violent events associated with civil warfare that affected family or friends prior to their departure. Such was the case with Felipe, and Marcos. Sometimes the journey, itself, was traumatic, as with Marcos, who at the age of 15 was confined in prison for six weeks after being caught by immigration authorities. Many of the youths who were exposed to war-related violence or who were traumatized during their journeys northward had to overcome lingering fears and chronic mistrust of others. For many such youths, these fears were a heavy psychological burden that made the challenge of adapting to life in a strange new society with an unfamiliar language and culture that much more difficult[3]. The effects of these traumatic events in the lives of some study participants during their adolescent years will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Family. The separation of families as a result of migration frequently strained family ties. In the case of many of the participants in this study, the escalation of warfare in Central America around 1980 caused many adolescents who were at-risk of

being harmed by the violent confrontations of that region to leave behind the family members with whom they had been living and to join others who had already moved to Washington. As was the case with Sandra Serrano and the Garza family, many youths had lived much of their lives with other relatives after a parent (usually the mother) left the family in search of employment in Washington. Although in some cases adjusting to living with different family members was not a problem, some youths had difficulty getting along with adult relatives with whom they had never lived (e.g. a step-father, aunt, or older cousin), or with whom they had not lived for many years (e.g. the mother).

Thus, the separation of family members during the migration process, and the interpersonal changes that occur while family members are apart, posed a significant added burden for many as they attempted to make the transition to living in Washington.

The Absence of Friends and Relatives to Provide Emotional Support. Related to the problem of the reconfiguration of families during migration is the problem of loneliness. Some youths such as Felipe Maldonado, who arrived in the city alone at the age of 15, had no relatives with whom he could live, or even call upon in case of need. Even among the majority of study participants who did have some relatives living in the area, adjustment to the absence of loved ones often was problematic. This could be especially serious in those cases in which youths were brought to Washington by parents or guardians contrary to their wishes. Thinking about family members, boyfriends, girlfriends, and others back home often made the process of making new friends and becoming involved in school and other activities more difficult. As stated by one informant, "Trying to live in two countries at the same time can really mess you up." As will be discussed in Chapter 3, social support was a key factor related to the early adjustment of these at-risk youths while they were in high school.

Presentation of these migration stories illustrates some of the causes for the rapid growth of Washington's Latino community during the 1980s. Descriptions of migration and early resettlement experienced in Chapter 2 also depict some of the problems young Latinos faced as they arrived in the city. In Chapter 3, the discussion shifts to a new set of challenges confronting study participants while attending high school and were coming of age in Washington. As teenagers, they were forced to confront political, economic, cultural and linguistic barriers that could easily interfere with successful participation in their new society. Chapter 3 examines how, individually and collectively, they responded to these difficult challenges, and the roles played by schools and community organizations in helping them to do so.

Chapter 3

Growing Up in Washington: High Risk, High Hopes, and Community Resources

At-Risk: What It Means for Latino Youths of Washington

In this chapter, we will examine what being "at-risk" meant for study participants during their teenage years. What problems did they experience as they were growing up in Washington? How did poverty, language barriers and culture change affect their attitudes, values and behavior regarding schooling and work? What roles did family, friends, school and community organizations play as they made the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and from their countries of origin to life in the capital city of the United States? As discussed in Chapter 2, severe hardships experienced prior to migration, on their journeys northward, and upon their arrival in Washington placed many of the Latino youths in this study at-risk for a variety of problems. One of these was the risk of becoming trapped in poverty. Many of the study participants who were refugees also had to cope with psychological scars from the violence to which they were exposed prior to migration (Cohon 1981:255). Also, many who were undocumented aliens during their first years in Washington had to cope with the insecurity of knowing that they could be deported, and that they might never be recognized as legitimate, legal residents of the United States. Further, virtually all study participants had to cope with the severe challenge of adjusting to life in a society with an unfamiliar language and culture (Cassel, Patrick and Jenkins 1969:938; Jenkins 1974:86). All of these additional problems made adjusting to life in the United States that much more difficult. These problems, singly and in combination, increased the risk that these youths would experience difficulties in their psychological and social adaptation (Cassel 1964:1484; Holmes and Masuda 1974:158) as well as becoming trapped at the margins of the U.S. economy and society (Hamburg, Coelho and Adams 1974:226).

First, we will examine the psychological and social adjustment of study participants while in high school, and the factors that affected it. Next, we will discuss the hopes and dreams they had as teenagers, and what happened to those hopes and dreams as they confronted the harsh realities of growing up in the city. Finally, we will discuss the influence of their high school, community organizations, and networks of family and friends upon how they negotiated the difficult passage from adolescence to young adulthood.

Psychological Adjustment and Social Adaptation During Adolescence

In 1982 and 1983, 181 Latinos were among the 250 immigrant adolescents from Latin America, Asia, Africa and North America who participated in a study of their psychological adjustment and social adaptation. At that time, all were high school students attending MCIP, and most had been living in the United States for less than two years. Informants in the 1982-83 study completed survey questionnaires regarding social and demographic characteristics, psychological adjustment and social adaptation. In addition, 15% of the 250 youths were interviewed about their migration experiences and their resettlement in Washington.

The instrument used to measure psychological adjustment was the Health Opinion Survey (HOS). The HOS has been used in many studies of community mental health, including some studies of adolescents in high school settings (Leighton 1977:799; Kellert, Williams, Whyte, et.al. 1967:391; Cohen 1979). It is composed of 20 items measuring the frequency of occurrence of common psychiatric symptoms such as sleeplessness, trembling hands, and difficulty breathing. The possible responses regarding the frequency of occurrence of these symptoms are: (1) Never; (2) Sometimes, and; (3) Often. Possible scores on the HOS range from 20 to 60. Scores below 30 are considered "Normal," 31 to 34 "Borderline" and, 35 and above "High Stress." "High Stress" scores of 35 and above have been associated with psychiatric impairment and difficulties in psychosocial adaptation.

In addition to the Health Opinion Survey, the Psychosocial Adaptation Instrument (PSAI) was administered. The PSAI was first developed in another study examining the health and adaptation of adolescents in a South Texas city (Ready 1981:130; Ready 1985:443). The PSAI measures respondents' subjective assessments of their adaptation, in general, and within specific social environments such as the school, family, and peer group, in particular. Questions addressed respondents' sense of relatedness, efficacy, clarity of behavioral norms and degree of identification with behavioral norms. In addition, there are questions regarding degree of optimism, boredom, and measures of typical styles of coping when things go wrong[1].

The HOS scores of Latino informants during the 1982 study are presented in Table 5. Comparison of the HOS scores of this group of Latino high school students in 1982 and 1983 with those from other studies must be done with caution because items of the HOS may convey somewhat different meanings to persons of different cultures. Bearing this reservation in mind, however, it does not appear that the HOS scores of this group indicate unusually problematic psychological adjustment. Forty-one percent of study participants had HOS scores in the "normal" range, and 35% in the "intermediate" or "borderline" category. The HOS scores of 24% of Latino youths indicated high levels of stress. As compared to HOS scores of U.S. and Canadian youths reported by Dorthea Leighton (1977:799), Latino refugee youths in Washington were somewhat more likely to have scores in the intermediate range and slightly

Table 5 -- Health Opinion Survey Scores

HOS SCORE	N	%
Low	69	41%
Medium	60	35%
High Stress	40	24%
	169	100%

less likely to have "Normal" and "High Stress" scores. Besides comparing the HOS scores of Washington Latino youths with those reported elsewhere, a primary objective of the 1982-83 study was to determine whether social and demographic variables and PSAI items measuring subjective perceptions of social adaptation would be related to HOS scores.

No social or demographic items or variables measuring circumstances of migration were found to be related to psychological adjustment. There were no significant differences in HOS scores according to gender, age, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, country of origin, stated reason for leaving native country, length of time in Washington, or any other social or demographic variable. Seven of the 24 items from the PSAI, however, were found to be related to HOS scores[2]. In general, psychological adjustment was related to whether youths felt "at home" with their parents, or other guardians. Healthy adjustment also was more likely to occur when youths identified with the prevailing norms controlling social interaction outside the home, and when they found the immediate social environments in which they interacted with others to be emotionally supportive. Similar findings regarding the primacy of subjective assessments of social support for the psychological adjustment of Latino adolescents in Washington have been reported elsewhere (Morote-LaTorre 1985). These findings are consistent with other studies that have examined the attributes of youths who can successfully adapt despite exposure to serious trauma or ongoing environmental stressors. Among the resources that such youths typically have are certain personality traits such as the maintenance of an optimistic outlook, and the availability of social support from peers, family members, ministers or teachers (Garmezy 1983:76).

Growing Up in Washington: High Hopes and Harsh Realities

Findings from the 1982-83 study indicate that, despite the many hardships endured before, during and after their journeys to Washington, this group did not suffer an unusual amount of psychological dysfunction. Their healthy adjustment was related to

emotionally supportive social interaction within the family, with friends, at school, and in local community organizations. Together with the support that most youths found at home and in their ethnic community, the modest incomes that adolescent informants and their families earned in readily available entry-level jobs was sufficient to sustain them. Although few were satisfied with their difficult economic conditions while in high school, most maintained high hopes for a better future.

A salient theme in the comments of most Latino youths who were interviewed during the 1982-83 study was the hope that somehow they would be able to "make it" in U.S. society despite the difficulties they encountered due to poverty and, for many, their immigration status. Being an illegal alien made schooling and the acquisition of vocational skills that potentially could lift them out of poverty that much more difficult for the many youths who were not documented. On the other hand, despite their initial poverty and problems with immigration, virtually all were grateful for the opportunity to come to the United States and were anxious to take advantage of the educational and employment opportunities that were available. Soon after their arrival, most of these immigrant youths realized that they had a far better chance to have a safe and secure future in Washington than in their native countries.

As long as study participants kept in mind the difficulties they and their families faced in their native countries, they tended to fit Ogbu's model of an "immigrant minority," actively trying to make a better life for themselves through the conventional routes of employment and education. However some youths, especially those who were poor and who had lived in Washington the longest, were more skeptical about the future, and were susceptible to becoming involved in some of the more dysfunctional attractions of the streets. In comparing themselves to other Washingtonians, they had become more aware of their economic deprivation. Some were losing faith that schooling and hard work would enable them to get ahead.

When first contacted in 1982, 142 of 181 study participants (78%) expressed an opinion about what kind of jobs they would like to have in the future. Seventy-six percent, indicated an interest in one of the professions or in business. The most commonly cited professional fields were computers, engineering, medicine, nursing, education, and dentistry. Thus, most of these youths aspired to jobs that required years of post-secondary education. As mentioned in Chapter 1, only six in ten study participants would eventually graduate from high school or earn a GED.

By 1988, few had been able to make significant progress toward the baccalaureate degree that is a pre-requisite for most of the careers they aspired to while in high school. For a variety of reasons to be discussed below, the idealized model for the transition to adulthood (i.e. studying for many years to enter one of the professions) simply was not a realistic possibility for most of these youths. Because of problems such as a pressing

need to work and handicaps associated with their immigration status, many were forced to grow up early. Below, the comments of Felipe Maldonado reflect the hope that most had of finding a "better life," and their eagerness to work to make that hope a reality.

Felipe Maldonado. Although Felipe retained his optimism and worked hard to fulfill his dream, his economic needs and immigration status led him to drop out of high school. Undaunted, he later earned a GED and graduated from a two-year public vocational training program in electronics repair. His comments illustrate the clash between high hopes and harsh realities.

> I believe that if everybody had the opportunity to go to school, they would do it. You see, I had the opportunity, and I was at the right place at the right time. I was able to take advantage of it. If everybody had the opportunity, I think that they would do the same thing. Latin American people -- or any people from a third world country -- when they see that they can get an education, they are very hungry. Hungry for education. They realize that that's the only way to have a better chance in life.
>
> They also are very aggressive -- hard working. It's like if my grandpa says to me: "Would you like to end up doing all this hard work like I did or would you rather go to school and get yourself educated so you can do less painful work for more money?" I want the education, the career. I want to be able to have things. That's the way it is with most people. I consider myself to be a pretty aggressive and hard working person but there are people who are more aggressive than I am. Like Ana Ruíz. Even though she had her mother here to take care of her when she was in high school, they didn't have enough money without her working. When I was in high school I used to work after school -- but not like Ana. After Ana got out of school at 3:00, she went to work at the corner grocery store. She worked from 4:30 to 11:30 at night, and she always got to school in the mornings before I got there. I think that 90% of the people who went to MCIP had night jobs. They *really* wanted it. They wanted the schooling and they wanted to make a career for themselves.

Like Felipe, a number of study participants dropped out of MCIP either because they believed that they simply could not afford to spend so much time in school or concluded that to do so would not be worth the effort. Felipe attended MCIP for two years, quitting in 1982.

> When I started at MCIP, it was a very new school. They

> were starting these career [training and internship] programs, but at that time, I was illegal. With all the [training programs] that I wanted to apply for, they were asking for some kind of visa or green card. It was hopeless because I didn't have it. So, because I was illegal, I couldn't get in a training program through MCIP. And college was impossible too in the sense that I also needed papers plus money to get in. So I decided then that I didn't think it was worth it to go another year there.

Although economic and immigration problems led Felipe to conclude that attending MCIP until he graduated would be impractical, it was the help of friends who gave him a place to live that allowed him to enroll in high school in the first place. The material and moral support of family and friends was an important resources for most of the youths in this study. Being part of a social support network, however, sometimes required study participants to make sacrifices. The case of Tito Cortez illustrates how the informal "social security" system from which so many Latino youths benefitted really was a "two-way street." The obligation Tito felt to help others in his family required him to indefinitely defer his plans for education and a career.

Tito Cortez. In 1981 at the age of 17, Tito left his home in rural El Salvador to join his bother and cousin who already had moved to Washington. His father was a peasant farmer with less than a sixth grade education. Tito had reached tenth grade in El Salvador, but was unable to continue in school because of the war. When first contacted in 1982, he stated his reason for leaving home:

> I came to the United States because of the situation that my country is going through. I left my country because I do not want to die.

After arriving in Washington, Tito started to work two full-time jobs. His brother found him a job during the day as a dish-washer at the same downtown hotel where he worked. At night, Tito was employed as a busboy at the suburban Maryland country club where his cousin worked. After three months of 16 hour days, Tito decided that he would try to return to school to earn his high school diploma. His career goal was to become a paramedic or a nurse. He attended MCIP for almost two years, during which time he continued to work at night as a busboy. Below, he describes his daily routine while a student at MCIP:

> I had to work from four o'clock in the afternoon to midnight out there in Maryland, and then I had to get up at seven in the morning to go to school. So it was kind of difficult for me to do that.

Despite the difficult schedule, Tito was progressing in his studies. But in the spring of 1983 he was forced to drop out of MCIP to once again take a second job. It was his turn to help others in his family. Tito needed only one more semester to graduate.

> By 1983 things were getting kind of tight for me. Getting home late from work and then going to school was pretty hard. Then my parents started pushing me. They were writing me letters saying, 'Hey -- we want to go there [to Washington].' They were pushing me to help them get out of the situation [in El Salvador]. They didn't have any work and it was pretty dangerous. So I said, 'OK. I gotta quit school and get another job.' I started making more money and I helped them to come here [to Washington].

By 1988, Tito had returned to working only one job, working as a front desk clerk at a downtown hotel. He was married, and lived with his wife, baby boy, and one of his brothers. At the age of 24, he wished that he could go back to school but had come to the conclusion that it was too late:

> I realize now that I made a big mistake. I should have finished high school. But I thought back then that I needed [to make] more money to help my parents. Such is life...
>
> I am proud of myself because I have been able to go up a little bit. But as for the education, well, I wish I were still in school so I could be someone someday. But (laughing) I made a mistake when I got married. I got a baby so, I think it would be kind of difficult to go back to school.

Lupe Serrano. As with Felipe and Tito, the story of Lupe Serrano illustrates the resilience of many study participants when confronted by severe challenges while still in high school. Lupe arrived in Washington in 1980 at the age of 19. She had just had a baby and, as a single mother, saw little hope of being able to adequately provide for her newborn daughter in a country in the midst of a civil war. Lupe left her daughter behind in the care of her mother and travelled to Washington where three of her brothers already were living. When first contacted in 1982 she stated her reason for coming to Washington:

> My country is very poor and it is very difficult to make a career. But here, there are many opportunities to achieve something for the future -- or survive.

Soon after her arrival, Lupe found a job as a busgirl in a downtown restaurant. She continued working there six hours every

evening for three years, and eventually became a waitress. Supporting herself through her restaurant work at night, she studied English during the day at an adult education center. In 1982 she decided to enroll in MCIP. Although she was happy to attend high school and to work toward her goal of becoming a nurse, she soon became increasingly concerned about her immigration status. The work permit she had applied for through the restaurant where she was employed had been denied. After only three semesters at MCIP, Lupe decided that she had to take a job as a live-in nanny for a family with five children. She hoped that the family would be able to help her obtain her papers. Taking this job, however, meant that she would only be able to attend school part-time.

In 1986, Lupe finally graduated from MCIP. As of 1988, she was still working the same family as a nanny, did babysitting for another family, and also worked as a janitor in a synagogue. She had obtained her legal residency papers and was about to return to El Salvador to retrieve her daughter whom she had not seen in eight years. She still was hopeful about continuing her studies and eventually entering a profession such as nursing. In Lupe's words:

> I wish that I could just dedicate myself to studies, but I know that will never happen... I am going to continue studying and working. I think that maybe ten years from now I will finally be finished with my education and will be working in my profession. After that, my dream is to buy my own house for my daughter and me.

Felipe, Tito and Lupe maintained their optimism and demonstrated great initiative despite the tremendous obstacles they faced during their high school years. All, however, had to modify or indefinitely postpone their plans for education and careers because of economic and immigration problems. Despite the rescaling of their dreams due to their harsh confrontation with reality, each expressed some satisfaction with what they had been able to achieve. The decisions they made were profoundly influenced by the needs and expectations of members of their families and, in the case of Felipe, helpful adult friends.

Marcos Morales. In contrast to the stories of Felipe, Tito and Lupe, some informants became discouraged during their teenage years by the problems they faced, and became involved in peer group activities producing more immediate gratification. As described by Marcos Morales, some youths, especially those with the weakest ties to parents or other adult guardians, were taken in by the lure of entertainment and luxury items that the small amount of money they earned in entry level jobs could buy. According to Marcos, too many Latino youths compromised their futures because they were too easily satisfied:

> The challenge is to understand that in the United States, you can afford to live and have whatever you want, but

with lousy jobs. What people don't understand is that there will come a time when they will need to get more education. There will be a more difficult time when they won't be able to afford a family. It is so easy to achieve better in this country, but people just don't realize that. They are satisfied with less because they are still having their memories of the past--what they couldn't have.

Believe me, not everybody in my country (El Salvador) has a color TV. They come over here and don't even finish high school. Especially if they can speak English, they can get a job -- maybe a mediocre job --but they get it. They can afford to live by themselves and afford things. They don't realize that in the future they will be needing more. If they don't get an education, they at least need to learn a skill. But there are a lot of people who are satisfied with doing busboy or other lousy jobs.

Sal Bolaños. The story of Sal Bolaños illustrates some of the points made by Marcos. Sal came to Washington from Guatemala City in 1980 at the age of 17. Unlike most study participants, he came from a professional family. Sal had lived most of his life with his parents in Guatemala but was born in California where his father was once a student. Sal explained that the only reason that he came to Washington was that his aunt lived in the city, and he needed to spend time in the U.S. so that he would not lose his citizenship. Sal was not a very good student in Guatemala, although he attended classes regularly and received passing grades. In 1980 he enrolled in a public high school and did poorly. By 1982, his motivation for school work had disappeared and he was flunking all of his courses. He and his aunt decided that it would be better for him to transfer to MCIP where there were more Spanish-speaking teachers and students.

When first interviewed shortly after enrolling in MCIP, Sal attributed his early difficulties to not knowing English when he first arrived in Washington.

> When I went to the store and wanted something, but I couldn't say it, that was really terrible. It made me afraid every time that happened.

After an initial period in which he resumed making progress in his studies, Sal's grades once again began to decline As he continued to experience failure in school, he became more and more interested in what was happening in the streets. At the same time, friction with his aunt increased to the point where they were barely communicating. He "hung out" with friends with whom he sometimes used drugs. The possibility of achieving his career goal of becoming a pilot began to seem more and more unlikely.

By 1988, Sal was married and lived with his wife and infant son. He still had not graduated from high school nor earned a GED. He worked as a waiter at a country club in Maryland; his wife worked as a clerk for an insurance company. As he reflected on his days in high school and why he dropped out, he made it clear that his lifestyle had changed. He attributed this change in his behavior to what he had come to recognize as the positive influence of his aunt and, later, his wife.

> When you come here, you come with a different idea of how the United States really is. You come here and see all these beautiful things. Life is different here when it comes to enjoying life. There is more freedom, more things you can do here. But then you start forgetting that one day you are going to reach the time when its not going to be all fun anymore. That's the hardest part when you have to move from just enjoying yourself to being a responsible adult.
>
> Having somebody like my aunt always on top of me saying, 'No, No. Do this! Do this!' -- at the time, I used to not like that. But now I think that is what stopped something really bad from happening. When I see other people come here from their countries -- I mean Spanish people -- they get here and they start to do well. But then they start meeting friends who are strange and they are not used to that type of life. Doing this and doing that -- you start following them, and you end up thinking that life is just easy. Maybe you get a little part-time job where you make $100. Back in the country where you came from, you won't find a job. When I was back in my country, I went to school. No problem. That was all I used to do. But over here you can make some money and it looks so good. I didn't need anything when I got here, but at the same time, I didn't have any money of my own. Here you're in love with your hundred dollars a week, having a part-time job. You have money to go out with your friends, and you start getting used to having these things. You forget that education comes first.

In Sal's case, as in many others, it would be overly simplistic to state that the only reason he dropped out of school was to make money to spend as he wished. Unlike most other study participants, he did not need to work, although he cherished the freedom that money gave him. Acculturation problems, difficulty mastering English, conflict with his aunt, and a long history of academic difficulty even before leaving his country made staying in school appear not to be worth the effort.

Marta Padilla. Latinas faced somewhat different pressures during adolescence. Some female students left school because

they needed to work to help support themselves and their families. More often, they left because of a combination of reasons, including a lack of academic progress and consequent sense of discouragement, family pressures, and pregnancy.

Marta's parents had moved to Washington when she was six years old, leaving her to be raised by an aunt in a provincial capital in El Salvador. When her father came to retrieve her in 1980 at the age of 16, Marta did not want to come to the United States. She had been a good student in El Salvador, and had just completed the ninth grade.

> When I first came here, it was very hard to leave my country, my friends. The fact that I was in a strange country, having no friends, nobody to go out with, made it very hard -- how should I say -- to feel comfortable here or at school. I don't know what it was. I was so lonely, crying. The counsellors at school helped me a lot, and with my problems at home, too. My mother didn't want me to go out at all.

Marta's early hope of becoming a doctor or a dentist withered in the face of her great difficulty learning English. Her discouragement at thrice failing an English course affected the rest of her academic performance. Her only success was a gradual social adjustment, but even that was at the price of education. She recalled with amusement one incident when she got into trouble at school after she had begun to feel more "at home" with her friends:

> I am an outgoing person and I get along very well with all sorts of people. I remember back in high school that one time they almost expelled me. We used to have these hooky parties. One day we had one and they blamed it all on me. They said that I was the one who started it. I told them (school authorities) 'I didn't take them by the hand. If they want to go, they want to go.'

Marta's involvement in peer activities helped her to at least partially reconstruct the sense of security and self confidence that were shattered when her parents brought her to Washington. However, her newly recovered self confidence was not based on her academic accomplishments. At the age of 17, she became pregnant and soon dropped out of school. She married the father of her child and by 1988 was the mother of two. After leaving MCIP, Marta began a secretarial training program in a proprietary business school, but family commitments prevented her from completing it. In 1985, she returned to work outside of the home with the help of a publicly funded job training program provided by a Latino community organization. When interviewed in 1988, she reported being very happy with a recently begun new job as a secretary.

Below, she recalls some of the very hard times that she had

experienced since leaving high school:

> One of the hardest things for me was that I got pregnant when I was 17. I don't regret it now. I love my children, but it was very hard to be pregnant. I've really had to struggle. It is not easy to raise two children, to look for a job, and somehow try to get back to school. I wanted to go back to school but I couldn't. I had to work to help support the family. It's been so hard! But this past year, it's finally been a little easier. I'm earning much more money and my husband is earning OK. We're doing OK, but only this past year. The years before were very hard. I grew up so fast...

A small number of study participants had lived in the United States for a much longer period than most others who arrived in the early 1980s. They left their countries in early childhood and attended elementary school in Washington. Most of the more recently arrived youths tended to remain optimistic about their chances of "getting ahead" in the United States, which they perceived as the land of opportunity. Over time however, other youths like Sal Bolaños and Marta Padilla, became increasingly frustrated with the trouble they had trying to overcome economic, linguistic, and other barriers to their social adjustment and academic progress. The few youths in this study who had lived in Washington most of their lives were more likely to become ambivalent about the value of school, even though they were better prepared to succeed because of their knowledge of English. These youths frequently received conflicting signals about what was worth doing from their peers, teachers, their families and from American popular culture. Having to deal with poverty and cultural differences caused some to experience inner conflict and ambivalence about their cultural identities. Such was the case with Joe Torres.

Joe Torres. Joe came to the city from Colombia when he was three years old. He left with his mother and two older siblings shortly after the death of his father in 1969. Mrs. Torres had decided to go to Washington, where her sister already was living, to look for a job. During his childhood and adolescence, Joe's mother worked as a cook in the rectory of a church. Mrs. Torres did not earn much money, although her sister was better off, economically. Below, Joe describes the ambivalence he felt toward school, and even his own ethnic identity, as he was growing up in Washington.

> You know, when you come here, you kind of go through a culture shock moving from one country to another. Everything is changed. That gives you a lot of things to worry about psychologically. It's very hard.
>
> Question: But you were raised here.

Ya, I'm an American, 98% really! I came here when I was three. I went to elementary school out in Maryland. I was staying out there with my aunt. I was a gringo--at least I consider myself a gringo. When I went back to Colombia last summer, they said, 'You're not Colombian, you're a gringo.' I said, 'I'm proud of it.' I'm americanized.

Question: Does being 98% or 100% "gringo" create problems between you and your mother?

Ya, it has, or maybe it's because I'm more like what they say my dad was like. I'm outgoing, I'm aggressive, assertive and everything else. I've learned out here (pointing to the street). I've learned to take care of myself. My mother never really had time to give 100%. She was working to keep us going to school. My aunt [who lived in suburban Maryland] really raised me until I was in sixth grade. Out there in Maryland, there weren't any other Hispanics at the school I went to. There were just black and Anglo-Americans.... I was never like the top kid, but it was always known that in whatever I did, I could compete and be there.

Joe began having a lot of problems when he moved back into Washington to live with his mother and enrolled in seventh grade at a predominantly white junior high school.

I wasn't doing anything illegal, it's just that I wasn't going to class. My mom wanted to put me in some kind of reform school. I was growing up and I was seeing that I was the only person who could deal with my problems. Later, my mom told me, 'If you are not going to go to school, you might as well start looking for a job.' That scared me enough to make me want to go back. I finished junior high in Maryland. By leaving that school in D.C., let's just say I got out of a mess. I was hanging around with the wrong kids.

My grades improved a lot in 9th grade in Maryland. Out there, there weren't many Hispanics. The ones who were there were red necks. They would listen to hard rock [music]. Hippies. I didn't have anything to do with the Hispanics there. [In the cafeteria] I would either sit with the blacks or the whites. Everybody had a hard time figuring me out. I didn't care, but I felt like I didn't belong.

I think that is one thing that I have to get hold of in my life. Even when I went to MCIP with all the Hispanic teachers and students, I felt like I didn't belong. I don't know what it is in my head that I have. I'm not

prejudiced against Hispanics, but the reason that I avoid Hispanics sometimes is that they only see themselves, and when they see a fellow Hispanic progressing, they try to pull him down or make bitter remarks or say things that aren't true.

Joe described himself as having been an average student at MCIP, but said that he had some serious personal problems while in high school.

When I went to Colombia, I met my half-brother for the first time. We sat down at the table and we talked. He said that for my age, I have the mentality of a 35 year old. You see, it's everything I've been through. I guess I've been through some really, really hard times. With my aunt to help, it was not so much being poor, but hard times like in how to deal with my life and learning how to correct myself when I'm going out of line.

In the next couple of years I could be in a comfortable position -- nice home, nice car. But even if it takes until I'm 60 or 80, I'm going to get there one way or another. You can see it in my eyes. The problem is that I just have to quit fighting with myself. I have all the options in the world to be whoever I want to be. I have to sit down with myself on that big rock up there and say, '*Joe, esto es lo que tu quieres* (Joe, this is what you want). This is how you do it, and no matter what happens, you have to keep going straight ahead.'

He went on to make the following comment about being Hispanic:

The most important thing for an Hispanic is to be Hispanic. Whether you are an American citizen or not, you can't lose your identity as an Hispanic. It's easy to lose that identity as you're growing up. You lose it by not having an idol or role model... We Hispanics come here and what do we do? Clean dishes. We are known as housekeepers; we are known as construction workers. Why can't we be known for leaders?

Question: Do you see a contradiction in what you were saying about how important it is to keep your Hispanic identity and what you said earlier about not wanting to associate with Hispanics?

It's life. I've always fought with this and I don't know how to explain it. Hispanics are nice people. I am one, myself. Let me rephrase everything. Let's say you're an American and you grow up, and you're in the safety patrol, the boy scouts, and everything. It's

the American way of being. When you're Hispanic, maybe you've got to lose your culture. You have to go to elementary school, you have to go to high school, you've got to graduate. But you don't do it because you feel like doing it. You do it because it is an obligation to make it in this place...

I think it has to do with economics and your environment -- where you have got to live, got to sleep, got to smell, got to breathe. I'm talking about home. If your mother is yelling at you and your father is yelling at your mother, and your brothers and sisters don't have anything and they are worried about a dress, or something -- spiritually speaking, that affects you. That will bring you down and it will depress you. You're worrying about that and you go back to school. What happens? You're distracted. You're worried about your mother and whatnot. Your whole attitude toward poverty is that you want to get out. Some of us don't get a chance to because we didn't get our education and we get caught.

So like when I was having problems [with other students] at school, they thought I was a richy kid -- you know, rich and stuck up. If you stick to yourself people think you're a snob. That happened to me a lot. I guess that happens in every culture. So I've had to fight myself and what others were thinking about me... In elementary school I was above average, in high school just average. Now I'm trying to be superior. I want to come out like that guy on the commercial for First American Bank -- American Firsts. The first Hispanic here who really made his mark. That's going to be me. Definitely!

By 1988 Joe had graduated from high school and enrolled in college. He had made little progress in his college courses, however, and was considering joining the army. Joe Torres' story illustrates the complex interplay of poverty, ethnic identity, and the shifting norms by which Latino youths who grew up in Washington evaluated themselves and were evaluated by others.

His story, and the stories of others reported so far, describe a bewildering array of challenges that faced Latino adolescents. We have learned of the high hopes held by most as they were growing up in Washington, and how those hopes for the future were modified by the difficult challenges of cultural adjustment, poverty, and immigration status. In the remainder of the chapter, we will examine the resources these youths had available to address the many challenges that confronted them as they made the passage from adolescence to adulthood.

MCIP and Other Community Resources

In addition to examining the many problems that made adjusting to life in Washington more difficult, it also is useful to ask the question: What resources did these youths possess that enabled so many to overcome the adversity they faced? As previously discussed, the support of family, friends, and ethnic community functioned as a system of social security in time of need. The support of family and others in the Latino community also served as a buffer against the psychological and cultural shock of adjusting to living in Washington. In addition to this informal system of social support, MCIP and Latino community organizations also played a crucial role in the adaptation of many youths. The school and community organizations were especially important sources of practical and emotional support for adolescents who had left their parents behind when they come to Washington, and for those, such as Marta Padilla and Sal Bolaños, who experienced conflicts with parents or adult guardians.

The importance of ethnic based and other voluntary organizations for the adaptation of migrants into their new environments has been well documented (e.g. Rollwagen 1974; Matos Mar 1961). Such organizations meet a variety of needs, including social and emotional support, material assistance, and the promotion of political interests. Settlement houses of the early Twentieth Century, such as Chicago's Hull House (Addams 1930), although not voluntary organizations, *per se*, engaged immigrants in mutual assistance and advocacy projects. They effectively linked the needs and aspirations of ethnically diverse newcomers with the resources of the wider society. They did not necessarily promote cultural assimilation unless this was not an objective of the immigrants, themselves.

Like the settlement houses of a previous era, MCIP facilitated the functional integration of Latino youths and their families into the economic and social institutions of Washington. It prepared them to effectively participate without demanding rigid conformity to the majority culture. Through the coordination of internships in businesses throughout the city, it also functioned to reduce any suspicion and mistrust that may have existed among long-time residents of Washington about the newcomers in their midst. In doing so, it lessened the probability that newly arrived Latino youths would become economically, politically and socially marginated.

The Multicultural Career Intern Program (MCIP) was founded in 1980 as a high school explicitly designed to serve recent immigrant and refugee youths. In 1982, a total of 250 students attended the school. Almost two-thirds were from Latin America or the Spanish speaking Caribbean, and nearly half were from a single country: El Salvador. Thus, the student body was predominantly Latino, but had a significant number of non-Latino youths, as well. Recognizing the need to educate the growing number of newcomers to the city, a group of Washington Latinos, with the sponsorship of SER, Jobs for Progress[3], founded MCIP. MCIP was

the first application in a multilingual student population of the Career Intern Program Model (CIP)[4] that previously had been developed to serve Afro-American youths who were considered "at risk" of dropping out of school. The original funding for MCIP came from a demonstration grant provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. When the monies from that grant ran out in 1983, the school struggled to support itself by administering a variety of federal and locally funded employment training contracts, sporadic and partial support from the District of Columbia Public Schools, foundation grants, and private and corporate donations. Not until 1986, after most of the participants in this study had left the school, did MCIP have a secure source of funding. The insecure economic foundation of the school between 1983 and 1986 meant that basic materials and supplies sometimes were lacking. Nonetheless, some study participants recalled in 1988 how the school's financial problems united students, teachers, and others in the communities served by the school in the common political cause of securing a stable source of funding from the city.

Programmatically, three factors gave MCIP its unique character:

(1) ***Multicultural Curriculum.*** MCIP made a deliberate attempt through its curriculum and extra-curricular activities to create a multicultural community, thereby engendering respect for the linguistic and cultural traditions of its students.

(2) ***Counselling and Social Support.*** The school maintained a nurturing atmosphere through its counselling program and the empathetic involvement of its multicultural staff in addressing students' academic and non-academic needs.

(3) ***Career Development Programs.*** MCIP emphasized career training and experiential learning through internships.

How these components of the MCIP program impacted upon the lives of study participants is described below, along with other community resources that were available during their adolescent years.

Multiculturalism and Community Education

When study participants first enrolled in MCIP, they interacted primarily with peers of the same nationality. As time passed, however, social interaction more frequently crossed ethnic lines. MCIP provided a social context in which youths of various cultures and nationalities continually interacted over a period of three to four years. For many of the students, MCIP became something of a "global village" -- a multicultural home away from home. Through its curriculum and extracurricular activities, the school engendered respect and appreciation for the diverse cultural

heritages and ethnic identities of its students. In so doing, it communicated the important message that mastery of skills necessary to function in the wider society does not imply the rejection of the student's ethnic identity.

One example of how MCIP promoted a multicultural model for participation in society was the school's annual commemoration of Martin Luther King's birthday. The life and teachings of King were described in the context of the Civil Rights movement in the American South by an Afro-American professor who participated in that struggle. The students and teachers then discussed the relevance of King's message for the countries from which they had come (e.g. El Salvador, Haiti, South Africa), as well as in relation to the current problems facing the youths and their families in Washington.

MCIP also put on programs in which its students performed the music and dance of their native countries. The youths performed not only for other students at the school, but for the public, as well. Programs were presented at places such as the headquarters of the U.S. Treasury Department before an audience that included the Secretary of the Treasury, at the Commerce Department, and at the Organization of American States. Performances also were held for the public on the grounds of the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials. Activities such as these helped develop the multicultural community at MCIP and educated the Washington public about the newcomers in their midst.

How MCIP influenced the perceptions of its students about their role as co-equal participants in a multicultural society is summarized well in these brief comments by Roger Rodriguez:

> One of the best things that has happened to me, I think, is the experience that I had at MCIP. I'm talking about what I learned. I learned about the career of nursing -- what it's like, and what you have to do to get in. But it is not just the academic view, but what I learned as a human being, as a person. In that aspect I think that MCIP has helped me to better relate to everything here. Even though I didn't have anyone like family to advise me, I had MCIP counselors who were great, whom I will never forget. They were the only source that I had then -- to come over and talk. I didn't have parents. They were the only ears that I had to listen to me. They were the only ones who could try to understand me about the things that I did and I didn't like about this society. At the same time, I learned to relate not only to Hispanics, but to Vietnamese, Chinese, Africans, even people from the Middle East. I think that the multicultural way has been really helpful to me because now I can see the good in everyone.

Counselling and Social Support

MCIP placed a heavy emphasis upon guidance services and benefitted from a highly motivated staff of teachers and counsellors. Counsellors provided both guidance and practical assistance to students as they attempted to adapt to their new society, the demands of school, and the exigencies of securing basic material necessities. Even students who expressed some dissatisfaction with the school usually mentioned at least one teacher or counsellor who had helped them find housing, a job, or who otherwise got involved in a way that was perceived as extraordinary. The nurturing atmosphere of the school was due, in part, to the fact that the teachers and counsellors were bilingual and bicultural, many having come from the same countries as the students. Students' perceptions of the school as a place where they could become involved and find camaraderie and personal support engendered a sense of loyalty and belonging. Such a climate created a positive incentive for the students to conform to the values that the school promoted and to avoid some of the more dysfunctional attractions tempting urban youth. Below, Roger Rodriguez goes on to describe how an MCIP counsellor helped him through serious adjustment problems.

Roger Rodriguez. Roger left rural El Salvador in 1981 at the age of 17. He had been living with his mother and a younger sister in a town in the southwestern part of the country. His mother was employed by the government as a public health nurse. Because of frequent combat in the area where they lived, Roger's mother pleaded with him to leave the country. She suggested that he could stay with his cousins who were living in Washington, D.C.. Although reluctant to leave, Roger followed his mother's advice and began the journey north. Travelling alone, he crossed Guatemala, Mexico, and 2,000 miles of the United States. Once in Washington, Roger stayed for a short while with his cousins, whom he had never met before, and then moved in with two other young men from El Salvador.

He soon found his first job as a dishwasher at a downtown restaurant. Roger was paid $1.20 an hour for a 50 hour week. After a year of work, he told his boss that he would like to work fewer hours so he could go to school. According to Roger, his boss told him, "Fine, but find somebody else to work your day shift. Instead of $60 a week, we will only pay you half." Roger went on to explain:

> I agreed. I found someone to take my day shift and they started to pay me $30 for the 35 hours a week that I worked at night. Then they said that they needed someone to work both days and nights, so they laid me off.

Before he lost his job, Roger was earning less than a dollar an hour. After a very difficult month in which his roommates

bought him food and paid his portion of the rent, he found another job, this time as a busboy, and settled into a routine similar to that followed by many other students at his school. Monday through Friday, he attended classes from nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon and then went to work from four until eleven at night. He also worked weekends.

Having worked during his first year in the city under blatantly exploitative conditions before being laid off, having no close family in the area, (he did not get along with his cousins), and then beginning a grueling routine of school and work that left practically no time for relaxation, it is not surprising that Roger began having difficulties. Below, he describes some of his problems and the role a school counsellor played in helping him make the adjustments that were necessary to live in an urban environment in the United States.

> Miriam Figueroa is now my friend but she used to be my counsellor. She was helpful not only in motivating me and telling me how hard things are, but also that you really have to struggle in order to make it. She helped me a lot when I really got screwed up. I would get on a bus and wonder what all those other people were thinking about me. Like, 'that is just an indian sitting there -- a stupid guy.' Certain prejudices people have, it's true, but I was getting sick because of the things I was seeing... things I never saw in my country. We have racial problems [in El Salvador], but not as bad as here. I was seeing things from a racial point of view, but not from other points of view. I used to talk to Miriam about it and she used to understand. She helped me realize that I'm not the only one here in this situation. That's all I thought of after a while. There are so many other people who may feel like me, Latinos as well as many other nationalities. Now I don't think about it at all. I still notice things, but I just don't think about it....
>
> At one point, I just felt like giving up -- that was when my mother was in big trouble. You know the situation in El Salvador.... She was riding a bus from one town to another. That bus got massacred. Twenty-five people got killed and about ten were hurt, wounded. My mother, of all the people, came out OK, with no wounds. My mother said, 'I just prayed to God.' She is not religious, but that's what she did. That's what she thought helped, and that's what I think sometimes, too. See, my mother is big. She is not a person who can go on the floor and move this way and that way. She escaped unharmed just by luck. I heard the news and I felt bad, but I said to myself, 'Thanks God, it is over.' But it wasn't over...

> After that she got moved to another clinic near the border with Honduras. [In her work as a nurse] she had to move back and forth through the mountains between two towns, and I heard that the guerrillas wanted to kidnap her. They wanted her to help treat their wounded, the sick in their camps. Well, for a long time I kept hearing that everything was fine -- but I was worried. Finally in 1984 she got kidnapped. They took her to some town. She didn't know where she was because they put a bandage over her eyes.... I started thinking about her and my little sister. She was only eight. I got sick, I got sick really bad. Not sick physically, but psychologically, because I didn't know what to do. But I always say that one has to be realistic. I knew they wouldn't kill her. I knew they wanted to have her [nursing] services. I talked with Miriam, my counsellor. But then I began thinking: 'After all, we all die one day or the other.' I felt bad and I cried, and I was mostly worried for my sister.
>
> That weekend, two days after I heard the news, I decided to go dancing. Sounds crazy, but I decided to go to a discotheque and dance. I knew my mother was disappeared, but I knew that if I stayed at home, I would get sicker and more depressed. So I went dancing, and I was dancing when my cousin came into the discotheque and told me that my mother was back home. I was criticized a lot for going dancing while my mother was gone, but that was what I felt like doing and that was the only way that I knew I could cope with this.

Roger graduated from MCIP in 1985 at the age of 21. He had been a good student and had participated in internships in health care settings which the school arranged for him. Working with the Red Cross and other organizations, he helped to provide services such as first aid training to the Latino community. Since graduating, he continued to support himself by working as a busboy. He also worked, sometimes as a volunteer and sometimes for pay, in several health and social service programs. Roger hoped to continue to work in the Latino community, and one day get involved in politics. In 1988, he was enrolled at a local college and was making good progress toward his goal of entering the same profession as his mother: nursing.

Edgar Garza. MCIP was not the only source of guidance and social support for study participants while they were in high school. Churches and other community based organizations also played an important role. Below, Jorge Garza's brother, Edgar, (Chapter 2), describes some of the problems that he and other young Latinos faced growing up in Washington, and how his mother, his school, and a church sponsored youth group enabled him to avoid becoming trapped in a pattern of self-destructive behavior.

Although he admits having made "mistakes," in 1988 Edgar was one of the most successful study participants in terms of education and employment. He worked as a respiratory therapist while continuing to pursue his college education. At the age of 23, he also was continuing his involvement with the church youth group, trying to provide guidance to younger teenagers as he, himself, had been helped before.

> [When I came to the United States, the biggest problem was] trying to be yourself; being who you are; learning who you are. Everybody wants to tell you what to do, what to be. I have a lot of friends out there who at one time I admired. But for one reason or another they got involved with this or that group of people. After that, they weren't themselves anymore because of what their 'friends' were telling them to be. Like doing drugs, especially. Drugs, alcohol, probably going and robbing somebody. See, people go around and tell you, 'If you want to be a macho man, you got to do this, this and this.'
>
> Coming to this country when you are 14 or 15, a teenager, and finding another group of people who don't think the way you think, it is really tough. You are really confused. You have pressure from your family. Your family is always telling you what to do -- especially the Spanish. They are very conservative. They feel that, at 15 or 16, they want to put pumps on you, you know? And then you go to school and you find a lot of the 'big' people. They say like, 'Hey man -- you're a chicken.' And you say, 'Hey, what the heck. I'm going to shut you all down, *ahorita* (right now).' And you're going to make a mistake. I made a lot of mistakes before becoming who I am now. Really, I was a lot of wrong things that I wasn't supposed to be. Most of the time I was out there in the street. I did everything: drink, and with my friends, drugs, selling drugs, rob somebody....
>
> I'm telling you this because that's the way I used to be. Why should we color reality and not tell this to anybody? It wasn't easy for me to live.... I started to realize what was happening to me because my mother had been telling me these things all along. Everything she said was coming true. I [started thinking] like, 'Hey, wait a minute. I have to stop here. I'm really going the wrong way.' That's why I am telling you these things. Right now, I'm not a big man. But one day I will be. I'm not saying that I consider myself a nobody. I am somebody. That's what I'm trying to tell [other Latino youths in Washington]: 'Look. I came here like you. I've been doing cleaning jobs. You're

not the only one. Don't be telling me that you're the only one, because you can change your life! You can't forget who you are; you have to be a strong guy.'

A lot of the kids who come here -- they don't have nobody. They don't have no family. But that's not a reason not to do something with your life. I know a lot of people who lived by themselves -- working and going to school, working and going to school. They can do it. There are guys who wish there was somebody to push them to do something -- to improve their lives. Somebody out there to say, 'Hey! I'm here! I'm here to help you.... What can I do for you?' A lot of kids just don't have that somebody.... I'm pretty sure that that's the way it is with 90% of the people out there. They don't have nobody to talk to.

There are a lot of people... you can talk to, but not a lot of people you can trust. For me, the [church] youth group was a big part of my life: my family, the school and the youth group. That's how I've been able to learn how to be myself, trying to know who I am, where I'm going.

As illustrated by the cases of Roger and Edgar, the availability of "someone to talk to, someone to trust" was crucial to the adjustment of many study participants during their adolescent years. Guidance provided by caring and competent adults at MCIP and other community organizations helped to prevent Edger, Roger and others from making irreversible mistakes.

Career Training and Internships

MCIP took an unrelentingly pragmatic approach in the education of its students. Vocational instruction and federally and locally funded career internships were integral parts of the program. Career development programs demonstrated to the students in a concrete way the relevance of education for successful entry into the job market. Without a clear linkage between schooling and employment, it is likely that many more study participants would have dropped out, having decided that school was a luxury they could not afford.

Prior to graduating, all MCIP students participated in two hands-on career internships. During each of the two internships, students spent a week observing and working with persons engaged in occupations in which the students had some interest. These internships provided a realistic view of the kinds of work performed in different occupations, and the types of training necessary to enter these fields. Upon completion of the hands-on internships, students submitted written reports of their experiences. The hands-on internships were preceded by a semester-long

course called the career counselling seminar. In it, students explored their aptitudes for different kinds of work and learned such things as appropriate norms of behavior in the work place, how to apply for jobs. The federally and locally funded programs based at MCIP that combined career training, work experience, and (sometimes) pay, were the following:

-- Bilingual and Vocational Training (BVT); English as a Second Language Instruction combined with computer training;
-- Training and Employment Program (TREP); data processing and clerical training;
-- On the Job Training (OJT);
-- Stay in School (SIS);
-- Work Experience Program (WEX);
-- Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

Even youths who dropped out of MCIP short of graduation benefitted from the school's career development programs. Classroom based vocational courses were open to all students. Only those who had proof of legal residency, however, were eligible to participate in federally funded internships.

Fifty-eight of the 112 persons interviewed in 1988 reported having participated in an internship or some form of vocational training such as typing or word processing classes offered by MCIP. Fifty-five of the 58 youths who participated in career development programs while attending MCIP were involved in programs that either were directly administered by MCIP or ones to which MCIP had referred them. The other three participated in programs sponsored by Latino community organizations. Nearly half of all career development programs in which interviewees participated while in high school were in office management and secretarial training.

Both internships and classroom based vocational training were instrumental in leading to future employment. Two-thirds (38/58) of the youths who reported having participated in some type of career development activity while in high school were working in related jobs in 1988. Nineteen of 29 who participated in paid internships and 19 of 29 who received classroom-based vocational training were still working in a field related to their training.

Three-quarters of those who received training in clerical skills or office management (21 of 28) were employed in related jobs in 1988. Five of the eight persons who entered and four of the five persons who completed the D.C. School System's vocational training program in office management were still employed in such jobs related in 1988. All seven who reported taking only one course in word processing while attending MCIP were using that training in their work in 1988. In contrast, none of the three persons who reported only having taken a typing class were working

in a related field. All of the students who received training in the medical and dental fields while in high school participated in paid internships with local doctors, dentists, hospitals and clinics. After leaving high school, most sought additional training toward certification for work in these fields.

Table 6 -- Interviewees Participating in Job Training while at MCIP and the Number Working in Related Fields in 1988

Type of Training	Received Training N	Working in Field in 1988 N	(%)
Office Management	28	21	75%
Medical Assistant	7	6	86%
Dental Technician	4	3	75%
Computers	3	2	67%
Mechanics	3	1	33%
Electronics	3	1	33%
Child Care	2	0	00%
Retail	2	1	50%
Communications	2	1	50%
Cosmetology	2	1	50%
Restaurant Management	1	1	100%
Sewing	1	0	00%
Total	58	38	65%

Many individuals who participated in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) while attending MCIP were not counted among the 58 who received some form of vocational training while still in high school. Nonetheless, the SYEP also provided some informants with publicly funded on-the-job training that would prove to be important for future career plans. Marisol López was one.

Marisol López. Marisol attended MCIP from 1982 to 1984. Unlike most MCIP students, she came to Washington from South America when she was a young girl and had no problems with the English language. She transferred to MCIP in tenth grade because of academic difficulties and attendance problems at her suburban Maryland high school. Her father worked as a carpenter and her mother as a domestic. She explained why she transferred to MCIP:

I heard about the school from a friend who recommended

it. He said that if I wasn't doing well at Montgomery High School, I should try MCIP. I was cutting classes too much at Montgomery and I just was not interested. I would only show up for the exams and would pass them, but I wouldn't go to class. My parents were getting divorced, things were getting really bad at home, so I figured I should try MCIP. It was very hard at MCIP at first because they keep you very straight in there. But the teachers cared. They would notice when I didn't show up and they would call my mother. So I had to show up. Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Thomas cared. They reasoned with me, counselled me.

Despite improved attendance and attitude at MCIP, Marisol dropped out before graduating. She married shortly after enrolling at MCIP in 1982. Two years later she dropped out when she had a baby. At MCIP, she participated in two paid on-the-job training programs related to her interest in business. Her first internship was in an insurance office. Later she worked as a receptionist and secretary with Metro, the local transit authority. Among the classes she took at MCIP was typing. She developed her secretarial skills during the summer in another job placement funded by the Summer Youth Employment Program.

After leaving school, Marisol worked a short while at McDonald's, and took night classes to improve her skills in typing at a private trade school. After McDonald's, she worked for a few months as a part-time receptionist at a lawyer's office. Then, in late 1985 she applied for a job as a receptionist at the offices of a large public interest organization. In 1988, she was still at that organization but, by then had risen to the position of manager of membership services. She was responsible for maintaining the records of the organization's 270,000 members. Marisol credited the career counselling seminar at MCIP and the experience she received during her two internships for having given her an advantage when she first applied for her job in 1985.

Berta Patiño. MCIP internships and work experience programs also marked the route to career choices for Berta Patiño. Accompanied by her brother and sister, Berta arrived in Washington in 1981 at the age of 15 to join her mother who already had come to the city to work as a domestic. Practically from the day she arrived, Berta also worked to help support herself and her family. Because of the need to work, most of the time she only was able to go to school part-time. She attended classes at MCIP in the mornings, worked in paid internships in the afternoons, and then went to work cleaning an office building at night. She had these comments about her participation in career development programs while a student at MCIP.

Oh, yes, I was always working in the In School Program and the After School Program from almost the first day I entered school. I took typing because we had to take

> it, but I'm not very good with machines. I got in a word processing program at school too. They had a program there with computers and they paid you $35 to take the class. I was taking that for about six months but then I decided that I was just no good with those machines.

After her first year at MCIP, she helped conduct a survey of the needs of the Latino community in a project funded by the city's Summer Youth Employment Program. When that project was over, an MCIP career counsellor arranged an OJT internship at the nearby Veterans Hospital.

> They asked me what kind of work I liked, what were my interests. I told them that I've always liked working close to the people and that I liked nursing. So they sent me to work in the emergency department at the Veterans Hospital. I did lots of things like work as a receptionist, translate for patients, take the patients for x-rays or to the different wards along with a nurse. I helped the nurses change the beds. I also took medicines from the pharmacy to the patients who were there. I took the patients' temperatures and carried blood samples to the lab. I worked 15 to 20 hours a week after class. They paid me the minimum wage.

The hospital internship lasted nine months. After the program was over, Berta was able to spend the next school year as a full-time student, although she continued to do office cleaning at night to help support her family. The following summer, MCIP placed Berta at a health clinic serving the Latino community through the Summer Youth Employment Program. When the summer ended, MCIP arranged for her to continue working at a different clinic through yet another publicly funded internship.

> In the fall of 1985, [MCIP counsellors] placed me in the In School/After School Program. I went to work at WIC (Women, Infants and Children nutritional program). They trained me as a receptionist. I worked there one year part time at the minimum [wage]. At the same time, I still did the cleaning job at night and took my classes during the day. When I graduated, I told them at WIC that I wanted to keep working and to take more classes so I could continue in my career, but that when I graduated, I was going to lose my job [through the After School Program]. When I explained to my supervisor what was going to happen, she decided that she needed someone like me who was bilingual, and all that. So from 1986 to March [of 1988] I worked full time in the WIC program. They started off paying me $11,500 and I ended up at $13,300.

> Besides doing things like answering the telephone, they trained me to do filing, weigh the children, fill out applications for the program, and refer people to other programs. Also, if the mothers had problems with their babies, especially right after they were born and they had diarrhea, I called the nutritionist to see what was going on. If the nutritionist wasn't there I would make the calls. So I did a lot of the nutrition counselling. The nutritionist trained me to do these things because lots of times she wasn't around and I had to take charge.

In March of 1988, Berta left the WIC clinic to work at a city-run outpatient clinic that had many Spanish-speaking patients. Her new job title was "nutrition assistant," and her beginning annual salary was $15,000. When interviewed in 1988, Berta was happy with her career progress. She was taking a class to improve her spelling and English grammar and was planning in the near future to return to school for more formal training in nursing or nutrition.

Rosalba Pérez. The story of Rosalba dramatically illustrates the high hopes and solid work ethic of many MCIP students. If it were not for her counsellor and career training she received from MCIP both while a student and several years after graduating, however, it is quite possible that Rosalba would have become trapped in poverty as a single mother.

Rosalba enrolled at MCIP in 1981 shortly after coming to Washington with her family from a rural village in El Salvador. While in high school she lived in a small apartment with both of her parents and five brothers and sisters. Rosalba's father found work in a restaurant as an "ensaladero" (salad maker) and her mother as a cook. Rosalba was shy in high school and was reluctant to speak English for fear of making a mistake. In 1988, she explained how she twice flunked the Career Counselling Seminar, the MCIP course which she considers to have been most valuable to her, because she would not speak English in class. At the age of 18, while still a student, she became pregnant and soon decided to marry the father of her baby. She had known the father since the days they attended elementary school together in El Salvador. After she married, her husband and others in her family urged her to drop out of MCIP. Although shy, Rosalba was very ambitious and strong willed. Her hope of going to college and eventually becoming a criminal lawyer seemed to be fading away. Ms. Davis, her MCIP counsellor, was the only person she felt that she could confide in. Ms. Davis urged her to stay in school and not to give up hope. Rosalba graduated from MCIP in 1983, although she was very close to dropping out. While a student, she received career training in office management and word processing. A few months after graduating, her baby was born.

Shortly after the birth of the baby, it became clear to her that her marriage was not working out. In the face of her family's

disapproval, she and her husband separated and eventually divorced, leaving Rosalba with the responsibility of supporting herself and her child. Not surprisingly, Rosalba became quite dejected.

> At that point I was really down, and I thought that I would never move on and get ahead. But when I saw my child, I said, 'Wait a minute. I have somebody to live for now.' He is my whole wide world, the reason for my living. It's my son that made me.

Rosalba went to work cleaning commercial buildings, a dead-end job she kept for three years. She also worked as a cashier in a fast food restaurant. During that time she did not return to MCIP, but with the end of her marriage, and feeling trapped in dead-end jobs, she returned in 1987 to talk again with Ms. Davis. Ms. Davis introduced her to the school's Work Experience Program (WEX). Although Rosalba would be paid only $3.50 an hour, $1.50 less than she was making cleaning buildings, she would receive six months of on-the-job training, and then be eligible to be hired as a regular employee. The WEX program gave her the opportunity and Rosalba began to use the skills that she had learned while still a student at MCIP.

At the end of her six months of WEX training, Rosalba was hired as a file clerk by the city government. During her first year on the job she demonstrated her capabilities, was promoted to secretary, and given a substantial raise. In addition to working full-time as a secretary, Rosalba also held two other part-time jobs in 1988. She worked in a second clerical position in the evenings, and as a restaurant cashier on weekends, for a total of 75 hours a week. Rosalba's mother helped her with the care of her son. Although she was working more hours than she would like, she was proud of what she had accomplished. It made her happy that her grandfather, who also lived in Washington, told her that he was proud of her because she was the first one in the family to graduate from high school.

In 1988, Rosalba still hoped to become a lawyer and had regained her optimism that, one day, she would reach her goal:

> After all that has happened to me, yes, I am optimistic. Sometimes I can't believe what I have done. I am really proud of myself because there are certain times when I thought that I would stop living. But, thank God, I moved on. I didn't stay there. When I want to do something I go for it -- and I work for it.

Employment During High School

Work was a major part of the lives of nearly all study participants during their teenage years. One-hundred-and-seven of the 112 persons interviewed in 1988 said that they worked while attending MCIP. They reported working in a total of 177 different

jobs. As we saw in the previous case studies, it was not unusual for study participants to have worked full-time or simultaneously

Table 7 -- Jobs Held by Interviewees While Enrolled in High School

Type of Job	N	%
Office Cleaning	46	26%
Busboy/Busgirl	35	20%
Community Organization	15	8%
Clerical	13	8%
Retail Sales	13	7%
Waiter	10	6%
Medical/Dental assistant	11	6%
Food Preparation	8	4%
Other	26	15%
	177	100%

to have held two part-time jobs while enrolled in high school. Eight categories of work accounted for 85% of all the high school jobs reported.

Restaurants. Thirty percent of all jobs were in restaurants. In most cases, youths found out about these jobs through friends, family, or simply by walking into eating establishments and inquiring. Few of the jobs were in fast food restaurants such as McDonalds. Although more than half (52%) of all restaurant jobs were full time, (i.e., at least 35 hours per week) few provided benefits such as health insurance or paid sick leave. Most of the restaurant jobs that informants held while in high school paid slightly above the minimum wage. Busboy and busgirl jobs in good restaurants, sometimes paid higher, depending on how tips were allocated, and waiter jobs generally were the best paid because of tips. Some informants, almost all of them male, rose from dish washing and busboy to better paying jobs such as waiter, bartender and chef, even before leaving high school. We will see later in the chapter that many who worked in restaurants while in high school still held restaurant jobs in 1988.

Commercial Cleaning. More than one-fourth of all jobs held during high school were in cleaning. Almost all involved cleaning office buildings, and paid less than four dollars an hour, and benefits were seldom, if ever, paid. For all but one of the 46

informants in this category, these were part-time jobs, typically requiring four to five hours each evening and, for many, Saturdays, as well. As with restaurant employment, most informants found these jobs on their own or through personal contacts such as with family members and friends. Unlike restaurant work, however, there was little evidence that commercial cleaning provided opportunities for upward mobility.

Community Organizations. Almost half of the jobs held during high school with community organizations were summer jobs, usually funded by the city's Summer Youth Employment Program. All were part-time and almost all paid the minimum wage. Employing organizations included the Latin American Youth Center, the Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs, and the Spanish Catholic Center. There was considerable variety in the jobs and projects, but most involved gathering information through surveys in the Latino community or assisting with provision of services. Most of the youths who worked for community organizations during the school year were involved with a project administered by the Latin American Youth Center researching and compiling an oral history of the Latino community of Washington.

Clerical. Ten of the 13 clerical jobs held by informants while attending MCIP were the result of government-subsidized placements at the minimum wage. The few privately funded jobs paid slightly higher. Six were summer jobs funded by the Summer Youth Employment Program; none was full-time. In a few cases, subsidized placements led directly to regular employment for study participants while still in high school. More frequently, clerical employment provided experience that assisted young women to enter this field after graduation.

Retail Sales. Over half of the 13 retail sales jobs held during the high school years were the result of internships or job placements from MCIP. Three informants worked in sales during summer jobs, and 10 of the 13 worked part-time.

Medical/Dental. Eleven informants were employed part-time as medical or dental assistants, all through MCIP internships. Placements were made with private medical doctors and dentists and with local hospitals. As discussed below, many who worked in this field later obtained training for related jobs.

The remaining 15% of jobs held by informants while at MCIP were in the following fields: radio announcer, construction laborer, computer operator, electronics repair, house painting, domestic labor, other unskilled labor, beautician, and day care teaching assistant. No more than three persons worked in any one of these fields. The types of high school employment by graduates and drop-outs are shown in Table 8.

There were few differences in the types of jobs held by graduates and youths who would later drop out, although cleaning and busboy/busgirl comprised a slightly higher percentage of the

jobs held by non-graduates. Graduates were somewhat more likely to work in food preparation, retail sales, and in community organizations. None of the differences between graduates and non-graduates, however, was statistically significant.

Table 8 -- Jobs Held in High School by Graduate and Non-Graduate Interviewees

Type of Job	Graduates		Non-Graduates	
Office Cleaning	27	23%	19	31%
Restaurant (all)	33	29%	19	31%
Waiter	(7)	(6%)	(3)	(5%)
Bus	(19)	(16%)	(15)	(24%)
Chef/Food Prep	(7)	(6%)	(1)	(2%)
Clerical	8	7%	5	8%
Medical/Dental	8	7%	3	5%
Retail Sales	10	9%	3	5%
Community Organization	12	10%	3	5%
Other	17	15%	10	16%
Total	115	100%	62	100%

High School Graduation

Despite the innovative design of the MCIP program, 39% of the 168 study participants whose graduation status is known had not graduated from high school or received a high school equivalency certificate (GED) by 1988. Of the 102 persons who completed their secondary education, 88 (87%) graduated from MCIP, 8 (8%) graduated from another high school, and 6 (6%) earned a GED. There was no significant difference in the rate of high school completion for males and females. The probability of graduating from high school also was unrelated to country of origin, year of migration, number of persons living in the household, the absence of either or both parents from the household, language used at home, language used with friends, reason given for leaving country of origin, level of parental education, or parental employment. The high school completion rate of study participants was slightly higher than the 57% of all students enrolled in the District of Columbia Public Schools (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac 1989:37). Forty-one interviewees who did not complete high school or earn a GED were asked why they dropped out. They provided the

answers shown in Table 10.

As the stories of high school drop-outs presented above reveal, usually more than one factor played a role in a student's decision to leave school. It is likely that the following problems also affected decisions to drop out:

Table 9 -- High School Completion of Study Participants

Graduation Status	N	(%)
High School Graduate or GED	102	61%
Not High School Graduate	66	39%
Total	168	100%

Table 10 -- Reason Given by Interviewees for Leaving High School

Reason Given	N	(%)
Need to Work/Economic Necessity	14	34%
Loss of Interest/Peer Pressure	11	27%
Pregnancy and/or Marriage	10	24%
Repeated Academic Failure	4	10%
Already Graduated in Home Country	2	5%
Total	41	100%

(1) Level of academic preparation in country of origin;

(2) Age of the student;

(3) Inability to learn English;

(4) Personal and domestic problems.

(1) A review of the files of former students, both graduates and dropouts, shows that many entered MCIP with extremely low standardized test scores. The California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)

dardized test scores. The California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) was administered in Spanish to most study participants upon their enrollment. Language and mathematics scores generally were far below grade level. Although most of the youths had completed 8 to 10 years of schooling prior to coming to Washington, it was not unusual to find standardized test scores at the third to sixth grade level, especially in mathematics. Poor education in the country of origin or, a mismatch between skills that were learned prior to departure and those required in the U.S. undoubtedly contributed to the decision to drop out.

(2) The average age of students surveyed while in school in 1982 and 1983 was 17.5 years, approximately the age when most U.S. born youths graduate. The disruptions caused by warfare, migration and/or the need to work kept most informants out of school for at least a year before they enrolled at MCIP. As older students considered how long it would take them to graduate, many became discouraged. Some married, had children, or decided that they could not afford to go to school when they could be working.

(3) Some youths, no matter how hard they tried, and no matter the effort made by MCIP, found learning English to be an insurmountable barrier. Upon entering MCIP, Spanish speaking students took classes in English as a Second Language as well as other courses that did not require extensive English language skills--art, mathematics, and physical education. Most teachers were bilingual, and were able to assist students in Spanish. Other students readily stepped in to help in the few situations in which the teacher did not speak Spanish. However flexible and accommodating an approach MCIP took, the students eventually needed to master enough English to pass courses required for graduation.

(4) Family difficulties were major contributors to students' apparent loss of interest in school. As was found with Roger and Felipe, some youths had only a cousin, uncle or friend to stay with upon their arrival in Washington. The families of others were "reconstructed" upon their arrival in Washington, often by the remarriage of the mother who had come to Washington years before. Adjustment to the absence of family or to strained domestic relationships was both a common and serious problem.

Chapter Summary

The Latino youths in this study faced extraordinary challenges after arriving in Washington during their teenage years. Many left behind family and friends in their homelands because of threats of violence. Most arrived in the city with little money, and little knowledge of the language and way of life of the city. Almost all were at least partially responsible for supporting themselves and their families while they attended high school.

Most had high hopes of becoming educated and entering one of the professions, but the obstacles to achieving these goals were many. Most study participants were well adjusted socially and psychologically in the first years after their arrival. The support they found in informal networks of family and friends, at school, and in Latino community organizations were important resources for these youths as they struggled to adapt to their new society.

All participants in this study attended MCIP, a career-oriented high school that was designed to serve Latino and other immigrant youths who were considered at-risk of dropping out. By 1988, 61% of the study population had graduated from high school or had earned a GED. Most participated in career development programs while in high school. Both drop-outs and graduates reported having benefitted from internships, on-the-job training and vocational instruction provided by their school. In 1988, 65% of those who were involved in career development activities were working in jobs related to the training they received in high school.

The attractions of urban street life and of readily available work paying more than they could earn in their native countries caused some to ponder whether continuing in school was worth the effort. This dilemma tended to become more acute after a few years as they began to find that economic, linguistic, and sometimes legal barriers were preventing them from rapidly achieving the lofty goals that they originally had set. The few study participants who had lived in Washington since childhood were the most likely to question the value of doing well in school because of conflicting frames of reference emanating from their peers, family, school, and American popular culture. Thus, for a variety of reasons, these youths were at risk of becoming trapped in poverty and enmeshed in other social problems as they were growing up in Washington in the early 1980s.

The youths' stories make clear the nature of the challenges they faced while in high school. What it means to be an "at risk youth" is explained within the context of their lives. These stories also describe some of the social and institutional resources that enabled most to overcome many severe challenges. While most did not have money, they had the determination to try to make something of the opportunities they saw in Washington, and which did not exist in their homelands. Networks of family and friends, school, and community organizations all were important resources that facilitated the successful passages of most from adolescence to adulthood.

The program design and educational philosophy of MCIP facilitated the eventual successful participation of these youths in the social and economic institutions of the city. Together, the school's multicultural curriculum and career development programs promoted students' structural integration without forcing them to abandon their cultural identities. Despite the presence of serious political, economic, linguistic and cultural barriers, MCIP helped to establish a congruent relationship between the students' inter-

ests as individuals, as members of variously defined ethnic groups, and as participants in the broader community of metropolitan Washington.

Chapter 4

Learning to Participate

In Chapter 3, we examined the problems faced by Latino adolescents growing up in Washington as well as some of the resources that were available to assist them. For most of the participants in this study, graduating from high school was a difficult challenge. However, MCIP, the school that all attended, was a unique resource that assisted many not only with their education, but also with job training, and psychological and social adjustment. In Chapter 4, the discussion shifts from the experiences of study participants as adolescents to the even greater challenges many faced in trying to obtain a college education and other forms of post-secondary schooling.

Post-Secondary Education

Basic data regarding post-secondary educational achievements were gathered in 1988 for 146 (81%) of the 181 participants in this study. More extensive educational histories were obtained from the 112 interviewees[1]. Nearly one-half (71/146) of the study participants had made significant progress in a post-secondary educational program (i.e. completed a career development program, an associate degree, or at least one year of a bachelor's degree program). Two-thirds (55/84) of high school graduates had completed a year of college, an associate degree or job training program. One-fourth of high school drop-outs had completed post-secondary job training programs. As is shown in Table 11, women were more likely than men to have completed some type of post-secondary program or to have completed at least one year of college.[2]

Many more informants had *enrolled* in some form of post-secondary program than is indicated in Tables 11 and 12. These two tables show the highest level of schooling *completed* by study participants, and are based both on information gathered during interviews and from collateral sources. In contrast, Table 13 shows that 88 (79%) of 112 interviewees had enrolled in 147 different educational programs. Only 24 (21%) of the 112 had not participated in any program.

English Classes

Seventeen of the 112 interviewees had enrolled in classes to improve their written or oral English skills. The most commonly cited reason was to get a better job, especially for women interested in secretarial employment. The second most frequently cited reason was to improve language skills as a pre-requisite for entering college. Interviewees studied English at the following institutions: American University Community Studies

Table 11 -- Educational Progress after High School of Study Participants

	Males N (%)	Females N (%)	Total N (%)
None	47 (64%)	28 (38%)	75 (51%)
Completed Public, Private or Corporate Training Program *	16 (22%)	31 (42%)	47 (32%)
Associate Degree (AD)	4 (6%)	7 (10%)	11 (8%)
≥ 1 Year of College	6 (8%)	7 (10%)	13 (9%)
Total	73 (100%)	73 (100%)	146** (100%)

* Some training programs were begun while the student was still in high school.

** Total number of study participants whose post-secondary

Table 12 -- Educational Progress of Study Participants Who Were High School Graduates and Non-Graduates

Type of Program	High School Graduate N (%)	Not High School Graduate N (%)
None	29 (34%)	46 (74%)
Public & Private Training Programs	31 (37%)	16 (26%)
Associate Degree	11 (13%)	0 (0%)
At Least one Year of College	13 (16%)	0 (0%)
Total (146)*	84 (100%)	62 (100%)

* Number of study participants whose post-secondary educational status is known.

Program (6); University of the District of Columbia (4); U.S. Department of Agriculture (2); Private language schools (2); Northern Virginia Community College (1); D.C. Public Schools Adult Education (1); and, Montgomery County, Maryland Public Schools Adult Education (1).

*Table 13 -- Enrollment of Interviewees in Educational Programs after Leaving High School**

	Number Enrolled		Completed N	Completed (%)
English Language Classes	17		n.a.	*
High school (return)	7		2	29%
GED Program	15		6	40%
Career Development Program				
-- Community Organizations	15		12	80%
-- Private Trade Schools	26		15	58%
-- Public Vocational	12**		6	50%
-- MCIP Career Intern	3		n.a.	*
-- Corporate Training	5		4	80%
-- Colleges	1		1	100%
-- Military	2		2	100%
Associate Degree Program				
-- Private Trade School	5		5	100%
-- Public Vocational Ed.	1		1	100%
-- Colleges	5		5	100%
College Enrollment	33		0	0%
< One Year Completed		(20) (61%)		
≥ One Year Completed		(13) (39%)		
Total	147***		59	46%****

* No degree of certificate granted

** Five of the 12 began these programs while enrolled in MCIP and continued in them after graduating or otherwise leaving high school.

*** Total number of programs in which 112 interviewees had enrolled.

**** Percentage of 126 programs in which degrees, diplomas or certificates of completion were granted.

High School Diploma and GED

Although most interviewees who did not complete high school regretted having dropped out, few had returned to try to complete their graduation requirements. Two of the seven interviewees who re-enrolled in high school had graduated by the time they were interviewed. Two others were still attending classes at MCIP and hoped to graduate within one year[3]. Two had abandoned the idea of finishing because of work and family commitments and one planned to study for a GED in the near future.

Many drop-outs considered a return to high school impractical

because of their age, family commitments and work schedules. Those who had made substantial progress in their secondary schooling before dropping out were more likely to try to earn a GED. Of the 15 interviewees who reported that they had tried to earn a GED, six (40%) were successful. Three of the six received the GED through the Latin American Youth Center, and one each from the Spanish Catholic Center, the D.C. Public Schools, and the Arlington, Virginia Public Schools. The Spanish Catholic Center was the only place where study participants were able to take the GED examination in Spanish.

Career Development Programs

By far, the most frequently utilized form of post-secondary education was the career development program. Post-secondary career development programs were available from a wide variety of sources such as the public schools (including MCIP), colleges, community based organizations, trade schools, corporate employers, and the military. Some programs provided youths with government subsidized work experience, others with classroom-based instruction. These programs were well utilized by study participants because they promised, and frequently provided, quick access to employment in skilled jobs. The monetary cost usually was low. In the case of most publicly funded internships, participants were paid as they received on-the-job training.

As was discussed in Chapter 3, all study participants who graduated from MCIP, took a course called the Career Counselling Seminar and also spent two weeks in "hands-on" internships observing people working in occupations that were of interest. In addition to these mandatory activities, over half of the 112 interviewees participated in other career development programs while in high school, mostly in the fields of office management and health care. More often than not, study participants who became involved in post-secondary job training programs built upon skills they already had begun to develop in high school.

Forty-one percent of the 64 post-secondary job training programs in which the 112 interviewees participated were provided by private trade schools, and 23% by local community organizations. Nineteen percent were classroom-based vocational training programs offered by the D.C. public school system. The remainder were provided by corporations for their own employees (8%), publicly funded internships run by MCIP (5%), the D.C. National Guard (3%) and Montgomery College (1%). Ten of the 18 programs (55%) in which high school drop-outs participated were provided by community organizations, seven by private trade schools, and one by a D.C. Public School vocational program. In sharp contrast to the programs utilized by drop-outs, only five of the 46 programs (11%) in which high school graduates participated were provided by community organizations. Graduates participated in 19 programs offered by private trade schools, 11 by the D.C. Public Schools system, five by private corporations and three on-the-job training

programs coordinated by MCIP.

Women were much more likely to utilize career development programs than men, enrolling in 69% (44/64) of all programs. Forty-two percent (27) of all post-secondary career development programs provided training in office management or secretarial skills. Twenty-six of the 27 participants in programs in this field were women. The careers in which training was provided to interviewees are shown in Table 14.

Table 14 -- Types of Career Development Training Received by Interviewees*

Training Program Type	Enrolled N	Completed N	Completed (%)
Office Management/Clerical Instruction	27	20 **	70%
Clerical On-the-Job Training	3	3	100%
Paralegal	2	2	100%
Laboratory Technician	1	0	00%
Medical Assistant	2	1 **	50%
Music	1	0 **	00%
Travel agent	1	1	100%
Bank teller	2	2	100%
Mechanics	3	2	67%
Sewing	1	0	00%
Culinary	2	1	50%
Computer use	2	1	50%
Computer repair	1	0 **	00%
Electronics repair	3	1	33%
Modelling	1	0	00%
Interior Design	1	0	00%
Cosmetology	2	1	50%
Alcoholism counselling	1	0 **	00%
Printing Technology	2	2	100%
Real estate	4	3	75%
Military supply	1	1	100%
On-the-Job Training -- retail	1	1	100%
	64	42	66%

* Six study participants who were not interviewed are known to have completed post-secondary job training programs in cosmetology (3), office management (1), mechanics (1), and drafting (1).

** Seven career development programs were in progress at time of interview in 1988.

The case studies below illustrate how job training programs assisted many study participants, especially women, with their careers. Although men without job skills often found employment in positions that paid relatively well (e.g. in construction, as a restaurant waiter), nearly all of the better paying jobs available to women (e.g. secretarial, health care) required education job skills. In Chapter 3 we saw how Marisol López and Rosalba Pérez utilized post-secondary job training programs to develop skills they had begun to acquire in career development activities at MCIP. Post-secondary job training programs that built on skills that study participants had begun to develop while in high school benefitted Yanira Alvarez in a similar way.

Yanira Alvarez. In 1988, Yanira Alvarez was a 23 years old high school drop-out, single, and the mother of a seven year old son. Nonetheless, she had the demeanor of a confident and competent professional. At the age of 12, Yanira accompanied her mother from Paraguay to Washington to join her father who was working in the city as a chef at a good restaurant. After two years of junior high school, Yanira enrolled in MCIP in 1980. One year later at the age of 15 she got pregnant and had a baby. Yanira continued to live with her family after the birth of her son. Her mother assisted with the care of her baby, allowing Yanira to continue to attend MCIP until dropping out in 1983.

While in high school, Yanira wanted to become a computer programmer but said that she did not pursue studies that would prepare her for this career because she had a tendency to become impatient, angry and rebellious. Later, however, she went on to explain that not having had a green card (documentation of legal residency) would have prevented her from going to college in any case. Besides MCIP's mandatory hands-on internships and career counselling seminar, Yanira's only other career training in high school was a course in word processing, which she described as having been very useful.

Because of her father's good job, Yanira was one of the few study participants who could afford not to work for two years after she left high school. Between 1983 and 1985 she remained at home to care for her baby. She regretted, however, that during that period she did not further her education. In 1985, a former classmate helped her get a job as a computer operator in the administrative office of a labor union. Yanira worked there for seven months, maintaining and updating financial data. Leaving that job because of a conflict with another employee, she then went to work for nearly two years as a secretary for a company that provides employers with temporary workers. Yanira found out about that job from a friend who was a manager with the company.

She quit the temporary agency when she returned to visit relatives in Paraguay for several months. Upon her return, she enrolled in a private trade school for training as a travel agent. After Yanira completed the training in 1987, the school placed her in a job with a downtown travel agency. A few months later, the agency sent her to Houston for two weeks of additional training

in the use of computerized reservation systems.

In 1988, Yanira's job title was "supervisor of services for Latin America." Regarding her current job, Yanira stated, "Right now, I like it. The work is fun and I have lots of clients. We're the number one wholesalers for Latin America -- and I am the only one who speaks Spanish there. So right now, I'm number one." She went on to explain that most of her sales were to members of the city's large Central American community. Although happy with her job, Yanira hoped to return to school one day to study business administration.

Linda Quijano. Linda Quijano, also benefitted from post-secondary job training. Like many study participants, Linda came to Washington from El Salvador in the early 1980s, and graduated from MCIP in 1983. She tried college but found it impossible because of a need to earn money. At MCIP, Linda's initial ambition was to become a nurse, but a two-week "hands on" internship at an administrative office at the Smithsonian Institution moved her firmly toward a career in secretarial work. The hands-on internship and a typing class were her only exposure to secretarial work while in high school.

Eight months after graduating, Linda returned to her *alma mater* to speak to an MCIP counsellor about the possibility of entering a job training program. The counsellor and Linda decided that a government-subsidized on-the-job training program might be good for her, as it had been for others. Linda was placed in a medical doctor's office as a receptionist. The doctor was pleased with Linda's work during the internship and continued to employ her after the government subsidized wages ran out. Working in the doctor's office gave her experience in a wide variety of clerical tasks, from typing and filing to maintaining computerized records.

Linda left that job in 1986 for another attempt at college. Once again, however, her college plans did not work out. She soon signed on with a temporary employment agency where she worked once again in a clerical position. Within a few months, the first and only company at which the temporary agency had placed her hired Linda as a regular employee. She went to work in the Accounts Payable Department of a "Fortune 500" company. After one year, she had moved up to the position of secretary to the Director of the Finance Department. When interviewed in 1988, Linda was very pleased with her work, her salary, and the opportunities she saw before her. One of the company's benefits was free college tuition. Her plan was to start taking classes at night in business administration at a local university while continuing to work. Linda believed that the on-the-job training program in which MCIP placed her after graduating was instrumental in the success she had experienced in her career.

Manolo Pérez Although Manolo Pérez did not graduate from MCIP, an internship while in high school, and a short-term job training program a few years later played crucial roles in his

employment. At 23 years of age Manolo was one of the younger participants in the study in 1988. He had come to the United States with his family from El Salvador in 1981. Unlike most others, Manolo's family at one time was fairly affluent. His father was a captain in the army and his mother, a nurse. Shortly before leaving, things began to go very badly for him. His private school was bombed, and his parents divorced. His father came to the United States first. Later, Manolo, another brother and his mother came.

After enrolling at MCIP, the school placed Manolo in a four-month internship at a restaurant, whose owners made it their business to try to teach him as much as possible about operating the enterprise.

> I went there and started in the kitchen, learning everything about the kitchen. But I already knew most of that because I had been working in restaurants. Then they started to teach me about managing the restaurant; about receiving merchandise, making a profit, and all that they have to do. That internship was helpful because I only knew the part of being a waiter. I didn't know the part about being a manager, all the things you have to take care of.
>
> After the internship was over, they offered me a job there. The owners probably wanted to teach me more about running the restaurant so that I could help them when they got old. It would have been good experience, but I didn't go to work for them because of the money. I was making more at the country club as a waiter.

Manolo could not afford to take a cut in pay because his family was under severe economic strain. Later, he found that the income he earned working after school and on weekends at the country club was not sufficient and, in 1985, he dropped out to take a second job in a delicatessen. There followed a succession of jobs as a waiter in expensive restaurants where Manolo earned a good income from tips. In 1987, he became an assistant manager at an exclusive restaurant, where he was responsible for setting up banquets and making sure that the food, drink and decor would be to the customers' liking. He continued to work at that restaurant in 1988, but that was only one of the two jobs that he held.

Although the assistant banquet manager job paid very well, Manolo was ambivalent about restaurant work. He wanted a "more respectable office job", one with more regular hours. He was bothered by the fact that he still had not graduated from high school. While continuing to work as banquet manager at night, Manolo returned to school to study for his GED. He also enrolled at that time in a trade school for training as a bank teller. When interviewed in 1988, he had not yet finished his GED, but had graduated from his teller training program and had accepted a

job offer to work at a bank.

Manolo made more money in one week as a banquet manager than in a whole month at the bank. Nonetheless, he saw his future in banking. His strategy was to keep both jobs, get his GED, gain experience in banking, and then to get more education as soon as possible so he could start "moving up" at the bank. He believed that the teller training program had given him a start in what would become a rewarding career.

Associate Degree Programs

Eleven study participants (seven females and four males) had earned an associate degree since graduating from MCIP. Each of the associate degree programs required a minimum of one year of full time studies. Nine of the eleven degrees were in dentistry or other types of health care. Nine of the informants had participated in internships while at MCIP in fields related to the associate degrees that they would later earn. Six of the degrees were granted by private trade schools, four by public colleges, and one by the D.C. Public Schools.

Three of the degrees were earned by the Garza family (Chapters 2 and 3). Delmy Garza was trained as a medical assistant, Edgar in respiratory therapy, and Jorge in dental technology.

Delmy Garza. After graduating from MCIP, Delmy first went to the University of the District of Columbia for one semester. At that time she did not know what she wanted to study. In 1984 she decided to enroll in an associate degree program at a private trade school for training as a medical assistant. Even before finishing her associate degree, Delmy was offered a job working in an out-patient clinic of a hospital. Six months later, she took another job assisting two doctors in a clinic that served many Spanish-speaking patients. Delmy describes her work below:

> I do vital signs, medical histories, chief complaints, triage, initial intake. The doctor doesn't speak Spanish so I do translations, as well. I do whatever needs to be done on referrals.

In 1987, Delmy enrolled in night and weekend classes at a local college with the objective of becoming a registered nurse. She continued to work during the day. Delmy believed that her associate degree and subsequent work experience as a medical assistant gave her an advantage over her classmates in the nursing program. After finishing her nursing degree, her plan was to continue studying to become a midwife. Delmy and her brother, Edgar, were the only two study participants holding associate degrees who did not participate in internships while in high school that were related to their post-secondary education.

Alberto Osorio and Edgar Garza. In high school, Alberto

Table 15 -- Associate Degrees Earned by Interviewees

Sex	Program	School
F	Medical Assistant	Private Trade School
F	Medical Assistant	Private Trade School
F	Vocational Nurse	Public Vocational Education Prg.
F	Dental Assistant	Public College
F	Dental Assistant	Private Trade School
M	Dental Technician	Private Trade School
M	Respiratory Therapy	Public College
M	Respiratory Therapy	Public College
F	Dental Technician	Private Trade School
M	Computer Electronics	Public College
F	Accounting	Public College

Osorio and Edgar Garza (Chapter 3) were good friend who eventually would earn associate degrees in respiratory therapy from the same university. Alberto and Edgar were among the better students at MCIP and were prominent members of the school's very successful soccer team. Alberto's goal in high school was to become a doctor. Because of his interest in medicine, MCIP placed him in a two-month internship at the Veterans Hospital. The internship strengthened Alberto's interest in a medical career. Prior to graduating, he discussed his career plans with Ms. Lindsey, his counsellor. Ms. Lindsey advised him that it would be very difficult to immediately enter a four year pre-medical program because of his need to earn money. Instead, she suggested that he start by enrolling in an associate degree program at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), which offered programs in nursing, x-ray technology, mortuary science, and respiratory therapy.

Alberto and Edgar decided to enter the respiratory therapy program. Two years later, both had earned associate degrees and were working at a local hospital. Alberto and Edgar were continuing their studies while they worked. In 1988, Alberto had just been accepted as an undergraduate student in physical therapy at Howard University. Edgar was working on a bachelor's degree in political science.

Jorge Garza. In 1988, Jorge Garza had been working as a dental technician at a private laboratory for two years. What happened to Jorge after completing his associate degree was markedly different, however, from the relatively smooth transition from school to work of his siblings, Edgar and Delmy, and that of Alberto Osorio. Edgar, Delmy and Alberto were satisfied with the education they had received in their associate degree programs,

and at least somewhat satisfied with the jobs they found after graduating. In contrast, Jorge felt that he had learned little at his costly trade school. He could not find a job in his field for nearly a year after completing his associate degree in 1984. When he finally did find a job as a dental technician, his beginning salary was $3.35 an hour.

Jorge first decided that he wanted to enter this field while a student at MCIP. MCIP had placed him in the dental laboratory of the Veterans Hospital through the auspices of the Summer Youth Employment Program. When the summer job ended, the school arranged for him to continue working there in another paid internship. Jorge's description of his education and early work experiences illustrates how associate degree programs did not always produce the anticipated and desired results.

> Being a dental technician is a very hard job. You need at least five years experience, a long time; but I could see that that was what I wanted to do when I was at the Veterans Hospital. I wanted a career where I could work with my hands; something that would keep me interested and occupied. In this job, if you stop paying attention, you can lose a finger in the machine. Anyway, I decided that this is what I wanted to do.
>
> Someone from the Jefferson Institute (trade school) came to MCIP and told us about their associate degree program in dental technology. I said to myself, "That's where I am going." And that's where I went. My counsellor told me that I would have to get a loan from the bank and to ask for financial aid. She told me it was very expensive because the Jefferson Institute was a private school. It cost $6,000 for one year, which seemed like a lot to me. Anyway, I entered the program the summer after I graduated. I knew that if I didn't enter that same summer, I probably would never go. I'd still be cleaning offices! So I told myself, 'Get yourself in that program right now, otherwise you will never do it.'
>
> I didn't learn much at Jefferson, and I had to pay all that money. I don't even know if it helped me to get the associate degree from there. Maybe it did because I'm working in [a dental lab] now. But when I graduated, I didn't go to work in any laboratory! No, I had to go back to work cleaning offices while I looked, and looked some more, for a job. I think I learned more at the Veteran's Hospital [than in Jefferson's associate degree program] because, when they told you how to do something, we could do what they said. That didn't happen at Jefferson. They used to tell us, 'This is what you *will* learn. [On the job] experience will be your laboratory.' That's what they said, and that's why I felt

so bad; I couldn't do anything! I didn't feel prepared; I felt worthless! They used to say that they would help you find a position after you graduate, but they didn't even look. They finally closed that place (Jefferson Institute) down a year after I graduated.

It seemed like a miracle to me back in 1985 when my friend called and said, 'Look, there is this position at the Powell Laboratory, but it only pays $3.35 an hour.' I didn't like it but I had to take it. I had to get started [in my field] because I had to learn. That's what I did, but I was completely frustrated because I had my wife and my two sons. I had to pay for the apartment, food.... My wife worked too, but she didn't earn much, either.

My God, I felt so frustrated, I thought that my heart was going to pop out of my chest! I was having pains here, on this side, on the other side, in my back..... It all seemed hopeless, but I worked so hard in that laboratory! It was out of necessity that I worked like that. I tried not to think too much about the money. I've never been all that interested in money..... Most students think when they graduate from high school that they are going to make $10 or $12 an hour, but that's not the way it is. I always knew that. I kept telling myself, "Don't worry about the money. Just learn your career." Now I am at $9.00 an hour, and it's alright with me because I know that if they don't give me a better salary here, I can go to another laboratory. But I'm not looking [for another job] right now because I'm fighting to get the position of supervisor.

Bachelor's Degree Programs

Despite the fact that most study participants desired to enter careers that required a college education while in high school, no member of the study population had earned a bachelor's degree by 1988. Only thirty percent (33/112) of interviewees had taken any college classes in pursuit of a four-year degree, and only 12% (13/112) had earned one or more year's worth of credits.

Seven of the ten who had completed between one and two years of credits were continuing with their studies. All three who had completed three or more years of credits were still enrolled in 1988. Eight of the 13 who had completed more than one year of college are male and 5 are female. Five of the 13 students who had completed at least one year of studies were enrolled in private universities and colleges: Georgetown, Catholic, Howard, Texas Christian, and the Maryland Institute and College of Arts. Seven attended the University of the District of Columbia and one attended George Mason University. All of the 20 who had completed less

Table 16 -- Enrollment in Bachelor's Degree Programs by Interviewees

	N	(%)
Not Enrolled	79	70%
Less Than One Year Completed	20	18%
One To Two years Completed	10	9%
Three Years Completed	3	3%
Bachelor's Degree Completed	0	0%
	112	100%

than one year of college attended local public colleges. Only four of the 20 who had completed less than one year of college were continuing with their studies in 1988.

The three students who had completed three years of credits were working on degrees in design, secretarial science and accounting. The remaining ten who had made substantial progress toward a bachelor's degree were studying the following subjects: nursing (2); political science; physical therapy; communications; sociology; biology; music; elementary education; and business administration.

The importance of education for study participants, and the difficulties they experienced in acquiring it after leaving high school, are demonstrated by the frequency with which this was mentioned in interviews with 112 informants. Informants were asked whether they had experienced any major disappointments since they had left high school. Sixty-six responded to this question and, by far, the most frequently mentioned disappointment was not having been able to get more education. The inability to obtain more education was mentioned by 58% (38/66) of interviewees who expressed an opinion.

There are many reasons why study participants were not able to obtain the college education that they desired. The two reasons most frequently cited by informants were problems with immigration status, and economic constraints. Many reported that they had tried to enter local public colleges but were denied enrollment because they lacked "green cards" documenting their legal residency. Some were told that it was impossible to be admitted to college without a green card. Others believed they could have been admitted, but that they would have had to pay higher tuition.

Economic need limited access to college in several ways. First, the cost of tuition and books was an expense that some youths could not justify to themselves or to others in their families who were counting on them for immediate contributions to their economic support. Nonetheless, many youths were able to pay as much as $3,000 to $4,000 in tuition to attend private trade schools for shorter term job training or associate degree

programs. These expenses were considered justifiable because of the belief that they would yield an immediate "pay off" in terms of added income and career mobility. In contrast, the "opportunity cost" of potential wages that would be lost over at least a four-year period was an expense that many believed they could not afford.

Economic necessity impeded access to college in at least one other way. Most study participants worked while they were in high school. It was not unusual for students to work after school until midnight, or later, and then return to class at 9:00 A.M.. Such a schedule permitted little time for the type of studying that was consistent with a college preparatory plan. When this problem is considered in conjunction with tenuous immigration status, the challenge of learning English, getting used to living in a different culture and society, and adjusting to changing domestic configurations, it is understandable that some would become discouraged or come to the conclusion that a four-year college degree was not a practical option. A similar array of problems confronted those youths who did enter college. Very few of the study participants who were enrolled in college had the luxury of being full-time students. Virtually all worked while attending college, most in full time jobs.

Even though all study participants attended a high school that emphasized career development and provided access to realistic alternative paths into potentially satisfying careers, several interviewees had experienced severe distress at their inability to attend college. Some had accepted society's normative ideal of earning a college education to such a degree that the denial of that opportunity led to demoralization and depression.

Laura Benitez. Laura migrated to Washington from El Salvador in 1981 at the age of 15. Before the war caused her and her family to flee from their home, Laura had reached the tenth grade in the "preparatoria," where she already was specializing in the study of accounting. When the Benitez family reached Washington, her father found a job working construction, her mother worked as a domestic, and Laura helped with the family's expenses by cleaning offices in the evenings. She fulfilled MCIP's academic requirements by attending classes in the mornings. In the afternoons, she attended the D.C. Public Schools' program in office management. Laura graduated from MCIP in 1983, successfully completed the office management program six months later, and was placed in a secretarial job at the University of the District of Columbia. She worked there full-time and began taking college classes at night. However, the university discovered after six months that she was undocumented. Laura explained:

> I was forced to quit my job and to quit school. I had to start looking for something else because they were asking me for my green card. My lawyer told me that it would be better if I quit school and quit my job so I wouldn't have any problems with immigration. So I did,

and that's when I started working as a baby sitter.

Laura worked for a family as a live-in baby sitter from 1985 until May of 1988. Her employers were helping her to get a work permit, and she also had recently begun the process of acquiring her residency through the amnesty program. In August of 1988, Laura had just returned to college with the goal of becoming a child psychologist. She also was about to start working again as a secretary. Laura had these comments about her immigration problems:

> Yes, I was really discouraged. I even got sick. I had to quit school and I had to quit my job. You see, I wanted to do something for myself. I wanted to go to school. I was real depressed because that was one of my goals -- to go to school and to finish my career. I mean, I didn't feel like eating. When everything was blocked, it was a big shock for me. A friend of mine saw that I was discouraged and feeling sad and down. She knew that I really had to work, and she knew about this family that was looking for somebody. So she gave me a call. I went to an interview and then started working [as a baby sitter]. I worked for them until two weeks ago. It was OK because I got to teach these two little kids how to speak Spanish. That was nice, but I wasn't really happy because I wanted to go to school. But now I see a lot of opportunities for me in my future.

Pablo Toloza. Like Laura Benitez, Pablo was a good student at MCIP and had high hopes of going to college. He also came to Washington in 1981 from El Salvador at the age of 15 because of the war. Unlike Laura, however, the only family Pablo had in the area was an older brother who had come six years earlier. From 1981 to 1983, Pablo did not go to school. He lived and worked with his brother, who was a supervisor with a company that provided housekeeping services in office buildings.

Pablo finally enrolled at MCIP in 1983 and graduated two years later, all the while supporting himself by working as an office cleaner. He was very active in student organizations while at MCIP. Not having any family in the area except for his brother, he became very attached to teachers, some of whom became for him something of a surrogate family. When he graduated, however, he was unable to fulfil his dream of attending college both because of problems with his immigration status and because of family commitments. Shortly before graduating, Pablo got married and soon thereafter became a father. In order to support himself and his family, he began to work full-time as a waiter in the restaurant of a downtown hotel. By 1988, Pablo and his wife had two children and he was still a waiter at the same hotel. His wife was employed as a domestic housekeeper.

The strength of his desire to continue with his education

is apparent in his answer to the question, "How satisfied are you with what has happened since you graduated from MCIP?"

> I haven't been able to go to school, but I just got my green card this year. So, I am really looking forward to going to college in September. That's my dream. That's why I went to MCIP. Ever since graduating, I have been practicing reading and writing in English. It has helped a lot. Before, it wasn't possible for me to go to school because there were so many problems... I never gave up hope.

While still attending MCIP, Pablo did a one week "hands on" internship in the administrative offices of Washington National Airport. The experience stayed with him and, in 1988, his career goal was to work in aviation administration. When asked about disappointments that he has experienced since graduating, Pablo spoke with great emotion:

> Because of one little piece of paper I have not been able to go to school. I often think about me being somebody important, somebody helpful to other people. Sometimes I get so desperate because I think that I am not doing anything. Sometimes I think that I am good for nothing -- sometimes. It's natural, right?
>
> But now it's different. Now I have the opportunity. Everything is so clear and so open to me. I will succeed in life. I will study hard and learn as much as I can. I am going to be somebody...

Obtaining a college education was of great importance to Pablo. Yet, even with his newly acquired green card, there remained economic and other formidable challenges to the realization of his dream.

Ramón Puente. Two informants received full scholarships to attend private universities. The story of Ramón Puente shows that even such assistance does not eliminate the problems with immigration status and economic need that were commonly faced by study participants, or other problems that were of Ramón's own making.

Ramón's mother had abandoned him when he was a little boy in El Salvador. As a child, he lived off and on with his father and grandfather until 1976, when the father went to Washington in search of work. Ramón then went to live with his uncle, who was studying to become a medical doctor. The uncle convinced him that life was to be taken very seriously. Heeding his uncle's advice, Ramón stayed up late each night studying. By the time he left his father's country in 1981, he had reached tenth grade. He had been a good student and his dream had been to become an engineer.

Upon his arrival in Washington, Ramón stayed for a short time with his father. They did not get along, however, and Ramón found his own place to live after a few months. At first, Ramón did not go to school. He supported himself by working full-time as a construction laborer.

After nearly a year, Ramón decided to look for different employment in which he could work in the afternoons and evenings. He wanted to go to school. In late 1982, he found a job in a neighborhood grocery store. He described it as one of the best things that had ever happened to him.

> I worked there about five years. I just left that place a year ago. Right after I started working there, I started living in the same building where the store is. The [store owner] was really nice with me. He was like my godfather. He treated me better than my own father. He provided me with food. He put me through school. I lived with his family....

In 1983, Ramón enrolled at MCIP. After a few initial adjustment problems, he became one of the school's best students. However, in 1984, the year before he graduated, Ramón believes that he made his first big mistake.

> I got into trouble. I started messing around with women. I'm not saying I'm a *don Juan,* or anything, but that's been my problem all along. I got this girl pregnant, and that's when I had my first son. Things didn't work out with her. I mean, that was my plate and my dinner because having to support my kid, I couldn't finish college. I barely made it through high school. My grades were good, but what I'm saying is that I barely made it because the whole situation was a lot of stress. You have to support your family, then you have to go to school, then you have to come home after work and do your homework. I was still in eleventh grade when my first child was born.

When Ramón graduated in 1985, he was living with another woman. Shortly after graduating he married her and soon there was a second son. Ramón had been very responsible in trying to support both of his children and his wife. He thought, however, that having gotten involved with women prematurely had destroyed his dream of going to college. He continued to work nights at the grocery store and took a second job working in a prestigious private club during the day. Nearly a year after he graduated, something that happened at that club revived his fading dream of going to college.

> I was working at this members-only club, downtown. I used to be an attendant there. The president of Georgetown [University] was a member of the club, but I never

knew that. So, one day I picked up a *Sports Illustrated*, and I saw his picture with the basketball team. The next day I told him that I was really interested in going back to school. He told me that he was going to send somebody around to my house to talk to me. I thought that it was going to take a long while and that he didn't take it that seriously. Well, I was talking to him about two o'clock in the afternoon. At seven o'clock that same day, a recruiter from the school was at my house.

Ramón began attending Georgetown University in 1986 on a full scholarship. His wife worked as a clerk for an insurance company, and Ramón continued his part-time work at the grocery store at night. Together, he and his family had sufficient income to meet their expenses. After almost two years at Georgetown, however, Ramón had to quit. The problem was not his academic performance.

> I couldn't continue for two different reasons. I was getting financial aid from the school. I was getting full tuition. The thing that happened was that I really got kicked by the new immigration law. I needed to be legal for financial aid because the government requires it. The thing is that I didn't have my legal documentation at that time, so I had to drop out of school. I am going to get my papers through my wife (a U.S. citizen). I still don't have the green card, but what I have is a letter from immigration saying that I am a legal resident.

Adding to his problems, Ramón had to find new employment because the owner of the store where he had been working for five years retired and sold the business. Ramón had worked in three different jobs since leaving the grocery. He was dissatisfied with all of them because of what he perceived to be disrespectful treatment from his bosses. When interviewed, he was particularly discouraged because of recent expenses caused by an automobile accident. He was working in two jobs a total of 15 hours daily. Financial problems, and the interruption of his college education because of his immigration problems created friction between he and his wife.

Ramón was one of the few informants who expressed a pessimistic view of his future when interviewed. But he was far from giving up.

> They just told me at Georgetown, 'When you have all your papers together, you can come back'' Who knows? To get the green card, they are going to tell me to go back to San Salvador (to the U.S. embassy). I hope they don't tell me to go back to El Salvador right now. Where am I going to get the money to travel? See what

I mean? And if I miss that appointment [at the embassy]? That's probably what is going to happen.

When I wasn't working two months ago, I didn't have a penny in my pocket. My wife was buying the food and she was fixing the food. I felt so bad that I wouldn't eat. I wouldn't eat for pride. She would ask me, 'What's the matter with you?' I had been out of work for two weeks. I had no money and my wife was buying the groceries! I'm 23 years old. I've been working since I was 13. I provide for myself. I guess that I am just that way...

I mean, I didn't grow up with my mother. I've always been independent. I always face the rough side of the coin. That's why I am the way that I am. I think that's my destiny. You start suffering from day one, but I always keep on trying. I'm not ready to give up. If I were giving up, I wouldn't be working two jobs. I wouldn't be working at all. I would be selling drugs. You see, I always keep trying, but it never comes out the way you want it. That's tough, though because you always want something better for your sake. I think I am going to get a break. Every drunk has his drink; every dog has his bight, too. So I think it's time for *my break*. I won't give up. I won't! I hope that you print this and that you tell the people over there (current MCIP students) that if they're going to college, stick with that. Go with that because, you see, it is too difficult. It is too difficult. I mean, girls, don't get pregnant. Guys, don't get nobody pregnant like I did. Don't make a mistake in what you want to do. If you try to take care of too many things at once, you're going to end up at St. Elizabeth's [psychiatric hospital].

You've got to remember your roots, too. You always have to remember where you are coming from. That's what screwed me up. I knew what I had to do and I didn't do it. I think that there is still time. I know there is still time. When I talked to those people at Georgetown it was like, 'I'm going to do it! I know I'm going to do it! It takes time, it just takes time.'

I have to understand, too that this is not my own country. I am not the only one who is going through this. Some people I went to school with have problems with immigration, some are in jail. Many people are going through worse things than me. If I were in El Salvador, I probably would be dead by now. I'm glad I'm alive, that's what I always say. As long as you're alive, as long as you're awake, you can do anything for yourself.

Chapter Summary

Despite the fact that 81% of the study population had indicated while still in high school that they wanted to enter professions requiring a college degree, by 1988 none had yet graduated from college and only 12% had even earned one year's credits toward a bachelor's degree. Because of economic constraints and problems with immigration status, few study participants had been able to make significant progress toward their initial educational and career goals. Informants' inability to make progress toward a bachelor's degree was a major disappointment to many. Most study participants recently had become legal residents of the United States in 1988. For some who were determined to go to college, this was the opportunity for which they had been waiting. For many others, however, economic constraints and family commitments would prevent them from realizing the dreams of college and career they held in high school.

Associate degree and job training programs proved to be much more important educational resources for study participants than bachelor's degree programs. These programs facilitated entry into promising careers, especially in fields such as office management, medicine, and dentistry. Post-secondary job training and associate degree programs most often were used to further develop skills first acquired in career development programs while in high school. Job training programs were most heavily utilized by women.

Chapter 5

On The Job

This chapter describes the current employment and career paths of study participants in 1988. Information about employment is organized according to the types of occupations held. As the work experiences of study participants in different categories of employment are reviewed, the following questions will be addressed: How did educational and job training programs affect entry into, and mobility within, different occupations? What were the most common types of work related problems that study participants experienced? To what extent had they been able to progress to better jobs after leaving high school?

The most salient finding about employment is that very few study participants had experienced problems in finding a job. Of the 146 whose employment status in 1988 was known, 97% worked and 93% held full-time jobs. By almost any standard, these Latino young adults were very industrious. Everyone who was enrolled in college or some other type of educational program was simultane-

Table 17 -- 1988 Employment of Study Participants

Type of Employment	N	%
Restaurant/Food Service	24	16%
Clerical	23	16%
Medical/Dental	13	9%
Construction	12	8%
Domestic: Child care/Housekeeping	9	6%
Commercial Cleaning/Maintenance	5	3%
Business and Professional (non-medical)	14	10%
Housewife	3	2%
Para-Professionals and Community Workers	4	3%
Other Services	17	12%
Other Labor	11	7%
Other Skilled Labor	10	7%
Unemployed	1	1%
	146	100%

* Three participants from the 1982-83 study are deceased.
** The 1988 employment status of 32 of 181 (18%) study participants is unknown.

ously working. Even most mothers with young children worked. Three of the five individuals who did not work outside of the home were women who had small children and employed husbands. A fourth was a carpenter who was receiving Workman's Compensation benefits for injuries he sustained on the job. Only one of 145 was unemployed and looking for work. Although employment seldom was hard to find, finding a "good job" often was more difficult. The jobs that study participants held in 1988 are listed in Table 17.

Restaurant Work

Two categories of employment, restaurant work and office cleaning accounted for nearly two-thirds of all the jobs that study participants held while they were in high school. In 1988, few informants still worked as office cleaners. In contrast, restaurant work continued to be the most commonly held type of employment. Twenty-four, or nearly one in six study participants worked in a restaurant or food service in 1988. Eighteen of the 24 also had worked in restaurants while in high school. Why did so many continue to work in restaurants but not in commercial cleaning?

Unlike cleaning jobs, restaurant work provided opportunity for upward mobility. Most persons who held restaurant jobs while in high school and remained in the same field in 1988 had advanced to better jobs. Waiters in good restaurants reported earning $20,000, or more, a year. Jobs that paid well were not evenly distributed between men and women, however. Nearly all of the better paying jobs were held by men. More than three-fourths of the 24 study participants who worked in restaurants in 1988 were men.

Formal education was not necessary to advance beyond entry level jobs in this field. In fact, 54% of restaurant workers were high school drop-outs. Only one person, who worked as a chef, had received any post-secondary education related to his work. This individual attended culinary school. Two others who were working in the field planned to enroll in culinary schools. Some of the restaurant workers describe their views about their work below.

Roger Rodriguez. In Chapter 3, Roger described the exploitative wages and working conditions in his first job as a busboy in 1981. In 1988, Roger was still working as a busboy but was more satisfied with his work. Since 1983, he had been working part-time at a different restaurant. Unlike most restaurant workers, however, working as a busboy was merely a way to make ends meet while he was going to college. As an unmarried, idealistic student of nursing, he was less concerned about making money than most study participants. In 1988, Roger's hourly wage was low, but he much more from tips. Roger rather forcefully expressed his views on why so many young Latinos worked in restaurants:

*Table 18 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Employed in Restaurants**

Sex	Education	Job Description
M	Non-Graduate	Master Chef at Hotel Restaurant
M	Non-Graduate	Pastry Chef, Bakery and Restaurant
M	Non-Graduate	Asst. Banquet Manager, Restaurant
M	Non-Graduate	Waiter, Country Club
M	Non-Graduate	Waiter, Country Club
M	Non-Graduate	Waiter, Country Club
M	Non-Graduate	Hotel Room Service Waiter
M	Non-Graduate	Counter Attendant, Delicatessen
M	Non-Graduate	Busboy, Hotel Restaurant
F	Non-Graduate	Busgirl, Fast Food Restaurant
F	Non-Graduate	Salad Maker, Delicatessen
F	Non-Graduate	Waitress, Bar
F	Non-Graduate	Dessert Server at Restaurant
M	HS Graduate	Executive Chef, Major Tourist Restaurant
M	HS Graduate	Short Order Chef, Diner
M	HS Graduate	Waiter, Country Club
M	HS Graduate	Waiter, Hotel Restaurant
M	HS Graduate	Bartender, Restaurant
M	HS Graduate	Waitress, Cafeteria
M	HS Graduate	Crew Manager, Pizza Delivery
F	HS Graduate	Waitress
M	HS + Job Training	Bartender, Restaurant
F	≥ 1 Year College	Food Server, Cafeteria
F	≥ 1 Year College	Busgirl, Restaurant

* Twenty-two of the 24 restaurant workers were interviewed.

> [Restaurant managers] would rather have Hispanics, because when we work, we will do anything -- things Americans won't. Many Americans do not know anything about these things or they would rather ignore it... What kind of jobs do we do? Jobs that Americans don't want. What happens is that we are more exposed to exploitation than they are. We agree to be exploited more than they would, and that's what makes the profits. That's why many American employers would rather have an Hispanic employee. They know we will do anything they want and Americans will not do anything they want. They are told what their duties are and that's what they do. We are more flexible...
>
> [Restaurant] managers ask for illegals. They are hired

as dishwashers, and then they send them off to do food preparation. They hire us to prepare food, and then they have us washing dishes. If an American is hired in a job to prepare food, that's all he wants to do is just prepare food. He won't go back to washing dishes... Maybe that's why some guys say that we are taking their jobs -- but I don't consider that to be true. I think it is because we are more exploited -- I call it exploitation, because it is exploitation.

We allow ourselves to be exploited because we are not at home. It is money here -- everything is money. If you got no money, you got no apartment, you got no food, you got nothing. So in order to make a living, you have to suffer the consequences. After a while people realize that they are not back home and that they are being exploited. But we have no choice because we cannot go back. Why is that? Because we are exploited back home, too.

Manolo Pérez. Like Roger Rodriguez, Manolo Pérez also found that a compliant attitude can be an asset in finding and keeping a job. Unlike Roger, however, who believed that this attitude reflected the fact that Latinos had little choice but to allow themselves to be exploited, Manolo described his compliant attitude in more positive terms as "a willingness to please." He believed that this attitude had made him an attractive employee to restaurateurs and that it would also serve him well in other types of employment. As discussed in Chapter 3, Manolo's main source of income was his job as an assistant banquet manager at an exclusive restaurant. In 1988, he also had begun to work in a second job as a bank teller, a job that paid much less. Despite the low pay he received as a teller, Manolo saw his future in banking. Below, he discussed why the same attributes that made him successful in the restaurant business would help him to develop an even more rewarding career in banking:

[When we work a banquet] we try to make [the customers] really happy. Like when they say, "I don't want this glass, I want that glass...." I go with my manager, talking with the owners of the party. We also have to organize our people, too. We tell them who is going to be at the bar, who is going to be here, who is going to be there. It's a very complicated thing -- more complicated than the bank. The bank is kind of an easy job, but, in a way, it's almost the same: making people happy all the time. That's our main goal. That's why it's easy for me, because I do the same thing in both jobs.

When I had the interview at the bank they asked me what I did, and I told them about all my experience. They

were very happy and they hired me right away... Then, First American Bank called and said, 'Would you like to take this job?' And I said, 'No, thanks. I already took another job, so maybe next time.'

Sal Bolaños. Like Manolo, Sal Bolaños (Chapter 3) also wanted to leave his food service job, despite the fact that it paid well. In 1988 he was a country club waiter, but was looking for a job that would be more dignified and less "servile." Both Manolo and Sal dropped out of high school. Unlike Manolo, however, Sal dropped out not because he needed to help support his family, but because he had gotten involved in the youthful subculture of drugs and alcohol, something he left behind when he married in 1985. As discussed in Chapter 3, Sal had been working at the same exclusive country club for five years, and earned a stable and adequate income. He began there as a busboy while still a student at MCIP. He still enjoyed interacting with club members, some of whom were senators and government officials:

> It's a very nice job. The members over there like me, and are always calling for me, 'Sal, Sal, Sal.' I am happy, but it is not what I want to do for the rest of my life.

Sal went on to explain that he would like to enter a program to be trained as a diesel mechanic and then to get a job with Metro, the public transit authority. He explained that, for him, maintaining busses would be preferable to having to tend to the wants of country club members the rest of his life, much like a servant.

Elmer Villareal. Elmer described similar feelings about his work as a waiter. Like Sal, Elmer was a high school drop-out employed in a country club. He had been working in restaurants since coming to Washington in 1981 and had worked in the same job since he was in high school. Below, he reflects on his first job as a busperson.

> When I first came [to Washington] I worked as a busperson. I had a little trouble back then because I didn't know English. But they were really nice to me at the place where I was working. They told me that I should go to school and learn the language so I could get a better job. After a while when my English was getting better and better, they gave me a job as a waiter, and I started making more [money].

Unfortunately for Elmer, the first restaurant where he worked went out of business when he was still in high school. He was forced to drop out of MCIP in order to begin his current job at the country club. Like Sal, he enjoyed his work, was treated well by his boss, and enjoyed interacting with club members and

their famous guests.

> You get to know a lot of very important people over there. I've spoken to George Schultz, Dan Quayle, all these famous -- you know, senators and congressmen. It's very nice. I've seen, what's this guy's name, Arnold -- the guy who has the movies -- Swartzeneger. I seen him over there in person. I've even seen Evil Kenevil.

Despite the frequent contact with famous politicians and celebrities, Elmer was determined to find a job that he considered to be more dignified.

> I was just telling my supervisor that I want to take some kind of training, you know. And he said, 'I think that's a good idea. You are a young man and I bet you have some other plans in your life.' I said, 'Ya. I have to find another way to make a living. I'm not going to stay the same way.'
>
> I have this friend who graduated [from high school] last year. He's working with computers, taking them apart, and he told me that he makes pretty good money. He was telling me, 'Why don't you keep on studying?'

Elmer took his friend's advice seriously and had begun to explore his options in education.

Cristobol Ochoa. The possibilities as well as limitations of upward mobility in restaurant work are best illustrated by Cristobol Ochoa's story. In 1988, at the age of 23, Cristobol was the executive chef at a major tourist restaurant near the White House. He came to Washington in 1980 from Guatemala to join his father who already was living in the city. Cristobol's father had less than a sixth grade education and worked in a poorly paid job. At the age of 15, three months after arriving in the city, Cristobol began a daily routine that he would continue for the next three years until he graduated from MCIP.

> [MCIP] found me a job at this place that is closed down now, [called] Monaceli's. Later, they reopened it, but they only had catering and pastry, or something like that. It used to be a restaurant before so I started there as a busboy.... They just were looking for places where they could employ their students. I think that the main purpose of this was to keep kids off the streets after school. They (at MCIP) don't want you going around with the guys, hanging out. This was in '81. I stayed there about a year. Then I moved to Georgetown to a place that's also closed down. It was called Lisboa. I started out as a busboy there, too. Eventu-

ally I became a waiter. I worked there for about a year and a half. I went to school from nine to three and then I went to work at five in the evening until one, two or three o'clock in the morning. It would all depend. So, you know, I had a pretty tight schedule. The last year I was in school I worked as a cook at Millikins, in Georgetown. I found out about this job through one of my friends.

I used to be a waiter when I worked at Lisboa, but then I had to go back home [to Guatemala to get my] green card. So, I lost the job. When I came back I started working at Millikins as a 'prep' -- you know, like a salad prep type person. I liked what I was doing. I used to ask questions all the time, look around, be real nosey, take a peek. Then I began to do more of the cooking.

I moved here to The Corolla in '85 when the chef at Millikins moved here. He liked my work and he suggested that I come along with him. It was more money and so I said 'ya.' It was a good opportunity. I was going to be in charge here at night when he was gone. Then he moved away. They got another chef, but he didn't work out. I had the experience necessary to do the job, so it was proposed that I stay here and take care of this place. So I am the executive chef. I do everything that needs to be done. I do the payroll, ordering, food control, scheduling... I learned to do all of this just by working and seeing how it is done.

Right now, I'm working a lot of hours because I lost my soup chef. I caught him stealing so I had to get rid of him. I've been blank (short-handed) for about a month and a half and have been putting in like 65 or 70 hours [a week]. But usually when I have somebody else here I work from nine to five, Monday through Saturday, and I do a double on any of the days when it is needed.

I like this work. Right now they are talking about opening a new place, so I would like to just work some more here, and then, maybe move on. I meet a lot of people through this business; salespersons, a lot of friends at a lot of places. A lot of them suggested that I should move to a hotel [restaurant]. I have collected a few telephone numbers, and as soon as I can find somebody here to help me out, I think I'll go out and talk with some people and see if I can get a job at one of the big hotels.

Hotels will pay for schooling -- culinary school, basically.... When you go to [culinary] school, they'll

> teach you about management; they'll give you bookkeeping. It covers different areas -- not just the kitchen, itself. I'm lacking that right now. I just have the kitchen experience. Just food, itself. I need to learn some more about some other areas that are involved in the restaurant business.

Despite his impressive accomplishments as a chef, Cristobol wishes he could have done things differently. If he had it to do over, he would have gone to college and entered another field.

> When I graduated, I wanted to go to the university. I applied at UDC. But like I say, the problem was money. I was working and I was helping my father, you know. Out of every other check, I used to keep one, give him one, and so on. He was working but he wasn't making so much. We had a sister who wasn't working and she was going to school -- and my grandmother. So I had to help the family a little...
>
> I feel that I could have done better for myself. I got married when I was 19. If I didn't get married so early, maybe I could have taken a one-year career in computer programming or word processing or something. I mean, it's a short thing, a short time in school, but in the long run, you end up making decent money.

Cristobol's ambivalence about his career is expressed in these comments about other young Latinos entering restaurant work.

> While I was in school, the thing that I noticed about Latino students was that lots of them come from a poor country like I do, and they get infatuated with the [U.S.], and all the opportunities, the liberty that you have. You can do anything or go anywhere at all. Anyone can find a small job, part-time, doing dishes or mopping floors. Anything is going to give you money here, you know, as long as you work. As soon as they put their hands on some money, they forget about everything else. They just want to make some more money. They don't look to the future. Let's say I keep working right now for $4.00 an hour, maybe in ten years I'm making only $5.00. But if I go to school, right now I might be losing $4.00 an hour for two or three years, but in ten years, the knowledge is going to pay off some more. So they come here [to the restaurant], they get a job, and they forget about school. They are very irresponsible.

There probably are few people more responsible than Cristobol. While maintaining a seemingly unbelievable schedule while a student

at MCIP, he was able to earn his high school diploma. However, his family's economic need, and his decision to start his own family at the age of 19, prevented him from getting any more education. Such immediate and pressing demands on Cristobol and other young Latinos made the ideal of staying in school to prepare for the future very difficult to achieve. Staying in school may be considered the "responsible" thing to do, but it is not hard to understand why, for many youths, dropping out to work in restaurants sometimes appeared to be the better, if not the only, available alternative.

Clerical Workers

Next to restaurant work, clerical employment was the second most common type of job held by study participants. As with restaurant work, a high proportion of persons employed in clerical positions in 1988 had obtained experience in similar positions while they were in high school. In sharp contrast to restaurant work, however, employment in this field was strongly related to education.

Six of the 16 interviewees who worked as secretaries in 1988 also held clerical jobs in high school. MCIP placed all six in government-subsidized clerical internships. The school also placed two others in internships after they graduated. Thus, eight of the sixteen interviewees obtained their first clerical jobs with the assistance of the school. Ten of the sixteen took courses in word processing or participated in a more extensive office management training program while in high school. Altogether, thirteen of the 16 interviewees either were placed in jobs by MCIP or received vocational instruction through the school. Three others had attended post-secondary clerical training courses at private trade schools.

We have already learned something of five of the study participants who were employed as clerical workers in 1988: Marta Padilla (Chapter 3), Joe Torres (Chapter 3), Laura Benitez (Chapter 4), Marisol López (Chapter 4) and Rosalba Pérez (Chapter 3). Below, we will learn more about Joe, Laura and Martin's perceptions of their work.

Marta Padilla. In Chapter 3, we learned of the difficulties that Marta had after she became pregnant as a 17 year-old student at MCIP. In 1988, she recently had gotten what she considered to be a good job as a secretary at a social services agency. Prior to leaving high school, Marta had not taken any courses in typing or word processing, nor had she worked in a clerical job. Later, she started a trade school course in computer programming, but because of family responsibilities, she was unable to complete it. After that, Marta sought help from Latino community

*Table 19 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Employed in Clerical Work in 1988**

Sex	EDUCATION	JOB DESCRIPTION
F	Non-Graduate	Receptionist
F	Non-Graduate	Receptionist
F	Non-Graduate	Receptionist, Government Agency
F	Non-Graduate	Receptionist, Government Agency
F	Non-Graduate	Office Administrator, Lobbying Org.
F	Non-Graduate	Secretary, Community Organization
F	Non-Graduate	Receptionist, Lobbying Organization
F	HS Graduate	Receptionist, Medical Office
F	HS Graduate	Secretary, Community Organization
M	HS Graduate	Administrative Asst., Government Agency
F	HS Graduate	Secretary, Government Agency
F	HS Graduate	Executive Secretary, Corporate
F	HS Graduate	Secretary/Bookkeeper, Restaurant
F	HS Graduate	Medical Secretary
F	HS Graduate	Church Secretary
F	HS + Job Training	Secretary, Government Office
F	HS + Job Training	School Secretary
F	HS + Job Training	Secretary, Lobbying Organization
F	HS + Job Training	Secretary, Lobbying Organization
F	HS + Job Training	Secretary, Corporate
F	≥ 1 Year College	Secretary, Lobbying Organization
F	≥ 1 Year College	Secretary, Hotel
F	≥ 1 Year College	Secretary, Government Office

* Sixteen of the 23 clerical workers were interviewed.

organizations. The assistance of these organizations was crucial for her entry into the clerical field.

> In 1985, I went to the Latin American Youth Center to get some help, some orientation. [They put me] in the summer jobs program (SYEP), and placed me with some lawyers. It was for eight weeks, so I gained some experience on that. After that, I decided that I needed a *better* job. I went to a dental office and worked as a receptionist. I found that job with the help of people at the [Latin American] Youth Center, too. They kept looking for anything that was available for me, so they told me about that job.
>
> I stayed with [the dentist] about six months, but then one day I said, 'I need a *better* job than that!' I went

> looking all over the place, filling out applications. By that time, I had a lot of experience. I went to MCIP to see if they know anything about available jobs. They said that this health clinic was looking for a bilingual receptionist. I went over there and did an interview, and they hired me. That was in 1986.... I learned a lot over there at [the clinic]. They taught me to use the computer, telephones -- it was sort of like secretary and receptionist at the same time.
>
> I stayed there for about two years. Then I heard about this job [at another community organization] where I am now. They needed a secretary, so I came to apply. I was still looking for something better than what I had, and I got something better. I have been working here for about three months, now. I do time and attendance, and type monthly reports. I also have been entering into the computer the cards of every client who has ever come here. I'm not done with that yet. And I type memoranda, reports...

Now that she finally was working in a job that paid moderately well, Marta became interested in returning to school to improve her job skills. She planned to enroll in a training program for bilingual secretaries that was offered by the Spanish Catholic Center.

Joe Torres. In 1988, Joe was working as an administrative assistant in a federal government office. He was the only male who was employed in a clerical position. Joe had no interest in secretarial work as a career. The primary interest in his current job was to learn about government policy making and policy makers. Prior to his employment as an administrative assistant, Joe held two other jobs in the private sector, both with administrative responsibility. Since graduating from MCIP, Joe had served as a youth representative on the boards of directors of three community organizations. Contacts with influential people whom he had met through his involvement with the organizations were instrumental in securing all three of the jobs he had held since graduating from MCIP.

Laura Benitez. Laura Benitez had studied word processing while a student at MCIP. Shortly after graduating in 1983, she completed an office management program sponsored by the D.C. Public Schools to which MCIP had referred her. She was soon placed in a secretarial job at a local governmental office, and at the same time, enrolled in college. For Laura, secretarial training was primarily an insurance policy. Her career goal was to become a child psychologist.

In 1984, immigration problems forced Laura to quit her job and leave school -- a big disappointment. As described in Chapter 3, she worked for three years as a live-in baby sitter, hoping

the family for which she worked would help her to get a green card. Not until September of 1988 was she able to work once again as a secretary and to resume her college studies. When interviewed, she credited the support of her Pentecostal church with helping her to avoid serious discouragement during the years she spent babysitting. Indeed, it was through another member of the congregation that she found her new job as a secretary for a lobbying organization.

Laura taught Sunday school during the three years that she worked as a domestic. She also became very involved in organizing church activities for teenagers at her church. She commented on how her church work helped her to avoid giving up hope.

> Some people get discouraged. Some of my friends at church have the same problem that I had. Some of them are going through the same situation right now. I'm glad I went through that because now I can tell them, 'Don't get discouraged!'
>
> I guess working with the teenagers is what helped me to really set my goals and to really fight for them. I said to myself, 'If I'm working with them, I have to set an example. If I quit right now, how can I stand in front of them and tell them to fight if I don't fight, myself?' And I expect them to do it! When people come up to me and say, 'I can't go to college,' I say, 'Well, I went through three years of working as a baby sitter, house cleaner, or whatever.' And they can get the green card working like that -- working for people and going to school at night. So that is what I tell them. Some of them take my advice and they do it, and some of them say, 'No, there is no way...'

Once her immigration problems were resolved, secretarial work was a stable source of adequate income for Laura, as it was for so many other young women in this study.

Health Care and Dentistry

Thirteen study participants were known to be working in health care and dentistry. As with clerical employment, entry into health care and dentistry was greatly facilitated by early placements in career development programs. Seven of the interviewees were first exposed to their careers through MCIP sponsored internships. As a group, medical and dental workers were the most highly educated of all study participants. Only one of the thirteen had not graduated from high school. A single mother, she had started working in 1988 as a nursing assistant at a local hospital through an MCIP sponsored work experience program. Nine of the thirteen study participants working in the medical and dental fields had completed an associate degree related to their

work. Ten of the 13 were women. Portions of the stories of five medical and dental workers already have been presented. They are Delmy, Nelson and Edgar Garza (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), Alberto Osorio (Chapter 4) and Berta Patiño (Chapter 3).

Table 20 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Employed in Health Care and Dentistry in 1988 *

Sex	Education	Job Description
F	Job Training	Nursing Assistant, hospital
F	HS Graduate	Nutrition Assistant at Clinic
F	HS+Job Training	Medicine Aide, Nursing Home
F	HS+Job Training	Dental Technician
F	Assoc. Degree	Licenced Practical Nurse
F	Assoc. Degree	Physician's Assistant
F	Assoc. Degree	Dental Assistant
F	Assoc. Degree	Dental Assistant
F	Assoc. Degree	Dental Assistant
M	Assoc. Degree	Dental Technician
F	AD + ≥1 Yr Col	Physician's Assistant
M	AD + ≥1 Yr Col	Respiratory Therapist
M	AD + ≥1 Yr Col	Respiratory Therapist

* Ten of the 13 medical/dental workers were interviewed.

In 1988, Berta Patiño was working as a nutrition assistant in a public health clinic that served the Latino community. She was the only study participant working in the medical/dental field who had not participated in a post-secondary educational program. Instead, MCIP internships in health care settings were the key to her entry into the field. Another interviewee, Roger Rodriguez (Chapter 3), was studying to become a registered nurse. Although not formally employed as a health care worker in 1988, he continued to be a medical volunteer for the Red Cross and other community organizations.

Delmy, Nelson and Edgar Garza all earned health-related associate degrees. In 1988, Delmy was happily employed as a physician's assistant in a clinic serving the Latino community. At the same time, she was continuing her studies in nursing. Edgar, along with his friend, Alberto Osorio (Chapter 4), followed the recommendation of their counsellor at MCIP to enter a training program in Respiratory Therapy. In 1988, Edgar and Alberto were working as respiratory therapists at the same hospital, both

having been hired even before completing their training.

Edgar and Alberto often were cited during interviews with former MCIP classmates as persons who "really had gotten somewhere." Although both were proud of their accomplishments and were at least somewhat satisfied with their jobs, they were not quite as happy with their 1988 status as their classmates imagined. Both were continuing their studies as they worked, Alberto toward a bachelors degree in physical therapy, and Edgar in political science. Edgar's new career objective was to become a lawyer, and one day, to enter politics.

Edgar Garza. Edgar describes below what he does on the job and why he is interested in changing careers.

> We give O^2 therapy, mechanical ventilation, and also chest physical therapy. We do pulmonary function status. We do chest X-Rays. Most of our patients have chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, asthma, emphysema, congestive heart failure... I work the day shift, 7:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. Most of the time I am out on the floors. They give you one unit and you carry your beeper. They can call you at any time, and that's where you go.
>
> I like my job, but for the time that you have to work, they expect you to do too much. To do it right, the way it is supposed to be, we don't have the time. But they expect you to do it, you know. And in this hospital, they don't give you the respect. They think that [respiratory therapists] don't know anything. I'm not saying that we know a lot, but we went through a three year program. We worked summer, fall and winter. We didn't get it free. Even the student doctors around here give us orders. Everybody is giving orders, and not one person. Too many bosses at one time. Sometimes it is not a very pleasant place to work...
>
> Now the starting salary is like $8.50. A year ago when I started it was $7.50. It's a big change. But the nurses are making $12, $14 or $15 an hour. That's why I want to change majors. I think I can get more...

Although Edgar wished to switch fields, most other medical and dental workers either were satisfied with their current employment or were working to upgrade their qualifications to advance to better positions in their fields.

CONSTRUCTION

The profile of construction workers was in some ways similar to that of restaurants workers. The absence of formal education was not a major obstacle to entry and advancement in this field.

Job mobility based on work experience was possible, but limited to men. Twelve of the 146 study participants were known to be working in construction in 1988. All twelve were male and eight were high school dropouts. None had received any post-secondary schooling and none had worked in construction while in high school. All had first entered the field by finding jobs on their own at one of the many construction sites in the Washington area, or through referrals from friends or relatives. As with restaurant workers, few entered construction primarily because they liked the work, itself. For some who were not close to graduating when they quit high school, construction work was attractive because of the comparatively high wages. Others took construction jobs only because other career plans had not worked out. Although the work was often hard and sometimes dangerous, the short-term earning potential was relatively high.

Table 21 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Working in Construction in 1988*

Sex	Education	Job Description
M	Non-Graduate	Soil Sampler
M	Non-Graduate	Laborer
M	Non-Graduate	Carpenter
M	Non-Graduate	Carpenter
M	Non-Graduate	Carpenter
M	Non-Graduate	Laborer
M	Non-Graduate	Laborer
M	Non-Graduate	Laborer
M	HS Graduate	Punch List Trouble Shooter
M	HS Graduate	Laborer
M	HS Graduate	Laborer
M	HS Graduate	Carpenter

* Four of the twelve study participants working in construction were interviewed.

Frank Gallo. One young MCIP graduate, Frank Gallo, began working as a construction laborer after a series of arguments with his father-in-law. Frank's father-in-law owned a small but profitable grocery store and had hired Frank to take on much of the responsibility for managing it. But the two found they had too many arguments, and Frank left to work as a meat cutter at

another grocery. After working for several months at the other store, Frank found that the income from that job was not sufficient for his needs, so he decided to try selling real estate. While the real estate business was getting started, he took another job in construction to insure the economic support of his family. He found that job simply by stopping at a construction site where he had seen a help wanted sign. He was immediately given a job as a laborer. When interviewed for this study, Frank considered the construction job to be strictly an interim source of income until he became more successful in his business ventures.

Other study participants had worked in construction-related jobs longer and were being promoted to more responsible and better paying positions. The strong willed and independent character of many working in this field is reflected in the story of Ricardo Elizondo.

Ricardo Elizondo. Although lacking in education, Ricardo is a very capable and hard working young man. Like many Washington Latinos who lack health insurance, however, his hopes for the future were compromised by illness and its consequent medical expenses. Ricardo enrolled in MCIP shortly after arriving from Central America in 1981. He hoped at that time to be able to earn a high school diploma although, at the age of 21, he had not even completed the eighth grade in his village in El Salvador. A few months after beginning his studies at MCIP, Ricardo was hospitalized with an emergency appendectomy. When he was released from the hospital he concluded that he would not be able to return to school because of the burden of medical bills.

> I had to leave school because I got sick and they had to operate on me. I never went back because somehow we had to find a way to pay the bills. My mother only earned enough to pay the rent and to pay for what I needed from the pharmacy. But we also had to pay for the doctor and the hospital. I had to go back to work to help pay the bills.

In 1988, Ricardo was employed by an engineering company as a driller and soil sampler at construction sites. Twenty-eight years old and not yet married, he lived in Virginia in an attractive apartment with his mother, brother, sister-in-law and niece. Although he had little formal education and was not totally fluent in English, Ricardo did not see his relatively high paying job in the construction industry as a career. Rather, he considered his work as just one step on a long staircase that would lead him to his goal -- home ownership. For several years, Ricardo worked nights cleaning offices, and, by 1988, had held three different day jobs. He believed he could succeed in whatever he did by working hard, but had no patience for employers who did not treat him with respect. In 1988, he was confident and hopeful about his future, despite his lack of a high school education and failure to become truly fluent in English. Below, he describes the suc-

cession of jobs that led to his current job as a soil sampler.

When I started going to school at MCIP I worked cleaning offices part time at night. I went to work where my brother already was working. I stayed in that office cleaning job until 1985. After I got out of the hospital and quit school, I started working days, too. First I got a job as an auto mechanic. I had some experience working on cars back in my country. A friend of mine told me about this job in a shop in Kensington. The pay was pretty good. We worked by the hour at whatever the book said. I had to leave after nine months, though, because they sold the shop. Then I went to work in a body shop that was nearby. I stayed there for about two years. I used to change the parts and put on the primer. That job paid better than the first one.

I left when some Iranians bought the place. They wanted me to work more than what I had been working before, and I told them, 'No.' They gave me a choice: work overtime or leave. I told them that I would work extra hours but that they would have to give me time- and- a-half for the overtime. They wouldn't do that so I told them, 'Hey, this is the United States. *¡Ya me voy!* (I'm leaving!).'

After that I went to work at a gas station in Virginia. I was in charge of the car wash. I found out about that job in the newspaper. At the car wash, I got the salary, plus tips. After I worked there for three months, they made me assistant manager -- so I stayed there for about a year. I left that place because they changed managers. I tried to get along with the new guy but it just didn't work out. I had to leave. That's when I got the job as a driller with the engineers.

What I do is drill holes take soil samples to see if sites are good for putting up buildings. My job is to do the drilling, and then classify the sample according to what kind of soil it is. I found out about the job through the newspaper, too.

When I started in '86 I was just an assistant. After six months they moved me up. Now I'm in charge of my machine, and I take care of my own work. The pay is a lot better than the other jobs I had. Up until now, it has been the best. I still want more, but I'm still there. I'm looking around for other jobs. That's the most important thing.

Marvin Vasquez. Marvin came to Washington from El Salvador

when he was a small child. He had been a good student in elementary school but began to run into trouble in junior high, and by the time he reached high school, was frequently skipping classes. When MCIP opened in 1980, Marvin decided to transfer. As he described it, his attendance, grades, and attitude improved. During his senior year, he developed an interest in computers. He hoped to continue his studies as soon as he got out of high school, but was unable to do so because, shortly after graduating, he married and became a father.

In 1988, Marvin worked for a home construction company doing "punch list" work. That is, he was a trouble-shooter, fixing problems that home buyers found as they moved into new houses. This was not the career he had hoped to enter. Marvin liked his work, but thought that he could have gotten into something better. He and his wife recently had been divorced. Marvin lived with his daughter, parents, and two sisters in his family's home.

Below, Marvin describes the work he had done since graduating from MCIP:

> When I graduated, my uncle got me a job at the tile company where he worked. My first job was at that new building on Dupont Circle that they opened not too long ago. I was laying tiles, you know -- well, really, I was just helping the ones who knew how to lay the tiles. I worked at that building for about five months. Then we got a job over at that school for the deaf (Gallaudet University) on Florida Avenue. After that they laid off everybody because the job was done. Anyway, the pay wasn't that good -- about $6.50 an hour.

After being laid off, Marvin tried to return to school. He enrolled in an associate degree program in electronics, but only stayed for two months.

> I had to find another job. That's when I went into house painting. I did that for about a year and a half or two years. It didn't pay that bad, about $8.00 an hour, but no health insurance, you know. I was doing the painting until my daughter was about a year old -- up to the end of '84. That's when I went to where I'm at right now, Thomas Jenkins construction company. I do all kinds of stuff for them, like punch out work. See, when people move in to a new house, I go and fix whatever is wrong. I had to learn how to do that because I started out low down, you know. I had to get experience first. The first job they gave me when I started was working with a shovel, and stuff like that. Hard work. Then after I had been there a year, they asked me if I wanted to go and learn how to fix a refrigerator -- like how to set it up and get it running. Easy stuff, but most of the people moving into the new houses don't know about it. I also put together dishwashers,

set them in... It's a pretty good job but I would like to get something better if I can. I've been there for a while, but, you know, unless something better comes along.... I would like to go into computers if I could. But I would have to go back to school, and I don't really know if I'll be able to do that. I've got my daughter with me and I have to look after her.

Domestic Work

As reported in Chapter 1, nearly half of the mothers of adolescent study participants were employed as domestic workers in the early 1980s. In 1988, nine of the young women in this study continued to work in the same occupation. Like the older generation of Latinas, these young women provided household cleaning and child care services for affluent families living in the Washington area. Five of the nine did not graduate from high school. Of the six women who were interviewed, four had only recently begun to work as domestics. One (Lupe Serrano) had worked as a domestic while she was in high school. Another (Linda Berlanga Bustamante) had been a domestic worker as a teenager before enrolling in MCIP. None of the six interviewees wanted to continue to work in this field. Most often, they chose this field because of problems with their immigration status. For example, Laura Benitez (Chapters 4 & 5) and Lupe Serrano (Chapter 3) worked as domestics in the hope that their employers would help them to become legal residents of the United States. A second reason why some chose this field is that it provided mothers with the opportunity to earn money while taking care of their own children. For these women, the disadvantage of low wages was offset by their desire to be with their children, and the fact that they did not have to pay others for child care as they would have had they chosen some other type of employment. Below, Linda Berlanga Bustamante describes some of her experiences working as a domestic.

Linda Berlanga Bustamante. When interviewed in 1988, Linda was happily married and the mother of two small children. She met her husband, Miguel, while both were students at MCIP. The family lived in a comfortable, but small, apartment in a quiet neighborhood. Miguel was a bellman at an expensive hotel in Georgetown. Linda and Miguel both dropped out of high school in 1983 to get married. Linda was 20 years old at the time. In 1988, she was glad she had married, but sorry to have dropped out of school.

I don't regret getting married when I was so young because things haven't gone so bad for us, as they say. But we just weren't thinking when we dropped out of school. We should have done our studying first, and then had our family. But we didn't think about that back then.

*Table 22 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Employed as Domestic Workers in 1988**

Sex	Education	Job Description
F	Non-Graduate	Domestic/Housekeeping
F	Non-Graduate	Domestic/Babysitting
F	Non-Graduate	Domestic/Housekeeping
F	Non-Graduate	Domestic/Babysitting
F	Non-Graduate	Domestic/Babysitting
F	HS Graduate	Domestic/Babysitting
F	HS Graduate	Domestic/Babysitting
F	HS Graduate	Domestic/Babysitting
F	HS+Job Training	Domestic/Babysitting

* Six of the nine study participants employed as domestic workers were interviewed.

In 1988, Linda was working part-time cleaning houses for two families, three days a week at one house, and two days at the other. She worked from eight o'clock in the morning until two o'clock in the afternoon, earning $235 per week. This schedule allowed her to leave her two children with her husband while she worked. Shortly after Linda got home from work, Miguel would leave for his afternoon shift at the hotel.

Housekeeping and babysitting were nothing new for Linda. She came to Washington at the age of 15 to help her aunt take care of her infant son. The aunt had moved to Washington from her rural village in Guatemala several years earlier. By 1980, when the boy was ready to start school, the aunt told Linda that she was going to send her back to Guatemala. Linda did not want to return home and instead found a job as a live-in domestic worker for a television journalist and his wife, who worked as a writer. Linda was responsible for maintaining the couple's house and caring for their two children. Although Linda thought that her pay of $93 a week was very little, she enjoyed working for that family. She was especially happy when, in 1982, she became a legal resident with their assistance.

After obtaining her papers, Linda enrolled in MCIP, where she remained for two years. She already was living with her boyfriend, Miguel at that time. Having quit her job as a domestic, she supported herself by working in a fast food restaurant after school while she studied. Below, she describes what happened after she dropped out of MCIP.

> After I got married and left school [in 1983], I went back to work taking care of another child for the next

three years. I worked from eight to five for a family that lived nearby in Mt. Pleasant [neighborhood]. I worked for them until I became pregnant with my second baby. I used to take the oldest one with me to that house, but when I got pregnant, it was too hard to take my baby and have to deal with the pregnancy too. That's when I decided to leave. After I had my second baby I started doing the house cleaning.

As for her future, Linda's had these thoughts.

I would really like to get my GED, because my husband already got his last year, and he has started to take some classes at UDC. I really want it because, when the children are old enough to go to school, I want to study for a career. I'm not planning on spending the rest of my life doing what I have been doing... I feel good about what has happened [to me] since I left MCIP. The only problem is that I didn't continue studying, but I think that I am going to have the time to do it once I set my mind to it.

Commercial Cleaning

Besides restaurant work, the cleaning of commercial office buildings was the single largest source of employment for study participants while they were in high school. Office cleaning accounted for more than one-fourth of all the jobs that interviewees reported having worked while they were enrolled at MCIP. In sharp contrast to the employment patterns of study participants as teenagers during the early 1980s, only five were employed in any type of commercial cleaning in 1988. Only one woman was still working in an office cleaning job typical of those held by study participants while in high school. This woman, who had a learning disability, was about to return to Central America. Another woman worked as a housekeeper in an apartment building. Two men, including Marcos Morales (Chapter 2), were managers of the housekeeping services of large apartment buildings. A third man was employed in the housekeeping department of a hotel. As with construction and restaurant work, formal education was not important for entry into this field. Only one of the five study participants employed in this field was a high school graduate. As with restaurant work, the better paying commercial cleaning jobs were held by men. Cleaning was considered by informants to be the least desirable of all jobs.

Maria Garcia. Maria had only completed the sixth grade when she came to Washington from El Salvador in 1981 at the age of 16. In 1982 she enrolled in MCIP upon the recommendation of a friend of her father's, who told her that she could finish school faster at MCIP "because it was bilingual". Although Maria attended MCIP

Table 23 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Employed in Commercial Cleaning in 1988

SEX	EDUCATION	JOB DESCRIPTION
M	Non-Graduate	Housekeeping Department, Hotel
F	Non-Graduate	Apartment Building Cleaning
F	Non-Graduate	Office Cleaning
M	Non-Graduate	Housekeeping Manager, Apartment Bldg.
M	HS Graduate	Housekeeping Manager, Apartment Bldg.

* Four of the five study participants employed in commercial cleaning were interviewed.

for two years, she believed she learned little. She was particularly disappointed that she had not learned more English, and blamed her inability to learn the language on the fact that too many of the students at the school spoke Spanish. The best thing Maria remembered about the school was that a counsellor placed her in an internship at a dental clinic. She was very interested in that work, but had to quit when she dropped out. She had no other job training or education since leaving MCIP.

After leaving school in 1984, Maria married and moved to suburban Maryland. She worked for two families as a babysitter, but enjoyed neither job because she thought that the work was too hard and the hours too long. She stopped working in 1985 when her daughter was born, and did not seek employment again until March of 1988. Maria's husband worked as a house painter.

When she resumed working, Maria found a job through the help wanted advertisements in *The Washington Post*. She began working in the housekeeping department of a large apartment building. Maria was not at all satisfied with her work. She earned the minimum wage and received no benefits. She worked from seven in the morning until four in the afternoon.

> I am not happy with what has happened since I left school. I wanted to do something more with my life, but since I don't have money, I don't have the opportunity. I don't want to do cleaning; I want to do something that I can be proud of. I would like something at least as good as, maybe, a receptionist. Then I would like to go on and work with computers.

Maria was unaware of any of the career development and job training programs that were available. When some of these programs were described, she reacted with surprise and enthusiasm, and

said that she would look into it.

Business and Professional (Non-Medical)

Fourteen of the study participants were involved in business or professional employment. Ten were high school graduates and all but one had some type of post-secondary education or job training. In addition to the fourteen who were currently working in business or the professions, four others who were interviewed were in the process of going into business. One was Frank Gallo (Chapter 5), who was just starting in real estate but supporting his family through his work in construction. A second was Felipe Maldonado (Chapter 2). Felipe was planning on quitting his job repairing professional video equipment so he could go into business for himself. The other two who were in the process of going into business were women. Yolanda Zaragoza and Luz Cruz were both enrolled in corporate training programs that prepared them to sell insurance and financial investment products.

In contrast to the previously reviewed employment categories, it is difficult to generalize about the career paths of study participants involved in various businesses and non- medical professionals. Especially when compared with health care and restaurant work, employment and career development programs while in high school usually did not have a direct bearing on decisions to enter this category of employment. Only one person, a computer consultant, had been involved in a career development program at MCIP that was directly related to his current work. As will be seen below, however, MCIP's career-oriented programs were helpful in a general way in preparing some for their current jobs. In most cases, study participants entered their current positions by means of their own talent, initiative and hard work. A few entered family businesses.

Although they worked in what could be considered "white collar" jobs, some of these fourteen individuals did not earn very high incomes as compared to former classmates who were construction workers, waiters, and some who were secretaries. Nonetheless, all who were interviewed were happy with what they did. They believed that they had "good jobs" because of the respect associated with their "white collar" positions. A "good job" was defined at least as much by the quality of the work as the monetary value of their wages. This is reflected in the comments of many informants[1].

Sandra Serrano. Parts of the stories of two professional workers were previously presented: Yanira Alvarez (Chapter 3) and Sandra Serrano (Chapter 2). In 1988, Yanira was in charge of the sale of airline tickets to Latin America for a large wholesale travel agency. Sandra Serrano was a new accounts representative at a bank. Below, Sandra describes how she gained confidence in her abilities through internships arranged for her by MCIP, and the progression of jobs she has held since graduating.

Table 24 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Involved in Business and Professional Employment in 1988.

SEX	EDUCATION	JOB DESCRIPTION
M	Non-Graduate	Retail Store Owner
F	Non-Grad + J.T.	Travel Agent
M	Non-Grad + J.T.	Pilot/Crop Duster
M	HS + Job Training	Asst. Manager, Pharmacy
M	HS + Job Training	Production Artist
F	HS + Job Training	Client Services Representative, Bank
F	HS + Job Training	New Accounts Representative, Bank
F	HS + Job Training	Interior Decorator
M	HS + Job Training	Computer Programming Consultant
M	Associate Degree	Computer Systems Manager, Lobbying Org.
F	≥ 1 Year College	Design Consultant
M	≥ 1 Year College	Youth Services Coordinator for Church
M	≥ 1 Year College	Real Estate
M	≥ 1 Year College	Home Remodelling Contractor

* Twelve of the fourteen study participants who were in non-medical professional employment or business were interviewed.

> When I was at MCIP I had the opportunity to explore all the different ways in which we could get ahead -- from going to places and learning how to present yourself and saying, 'I want a job.' I always had the ambition of not having to start at the bottom. MCIP sent me on my first internship to the [D.C. Government's] Office of Latino Affairs. They helped me a lot there. I always put them down as a reference, and they are a good reference because I did a good job for them. But really, if MCIP had not taught me about all the different programs that existed and how to benefit from them, I wouldn't have been able to get to where I am now.
>
> They also sent me on an internship to the [Smithsonian] Natural History Museum. Mostly what I did was tell visitors about all the activities that were going on at the museum. That really helped me a lot. It opened me up, because sometimes one is afraid of things. But when I worked at the museum, I came to understand that you just had to have the right presence -- to know how to present yourself. MCIP helped me very much in that way.
>
> All my family, especially my mother, really wanted me

to get ahead. She saw the need for me to get an education in this country, and it didn't matter if I didn't work... I wasn't an 'A-B' student [at MCIP], but I always got my 'Cs'.... I usually was involved in some kind of internship program because I didn't like just going to school and then coming home to sit if I could work at something -- even if it wasn't all that much. In my last program, MCIP sent me to a men's clothing store on Columbia Rd. I worked at that store from '83 to '84. They paid me about $2.00 out of their pockets and the [work experience] program paid me $3.35. The owner of the store is American and since Columbia Road is bilingual, lots of people go there who don't speak English. It is an advantage to have a bilingual person working there. I sold clothes, coordinated outfits for people, and I also was a cashier. Sometimes they had to do alterations on the pants and they showed me how to do that. After I got a little bit of experience, I got a job at Hecht's [department store].

I found the job at Hecht's on my own after I graduated. I explained to the owner of the other store [on Columbia Road] that I wanted to see if I could get ahead a little bit, get out of the neighborhood, and see other parts of the city. I applied at Hecht's in Bethesda, took a two week training, and began working in the men's department. After a while they gave me a little promotion to cosmetics. There is more money there because there is commission, plus your pay check. They paid me six dollars and something, plus the commission I got from the cosmetics.

Now that I had gotten my experience handling cash, I thought that I would like to go into banking. So I started working as a teller at First American. I decided to go to First American because they knew me at that bank in my neighborhood. I thought that maybe it would be easier to get used to the way they operated. So I called First American's Employment Office, and they sent me an application to fill out. The first time, I mailed the application, and I guess it was trashed. That's what I learned -- if you want to get a job, you had better go and hand in the application, yourself-- so I didn't give up. I saw in the newspaper that they were going to have a job fair that week on Connecticut Avenue. I went there, filled out the application, and they interviewed me immediately. After I finished filling out the application, I took a little math test, and that was it. Then they called me for a second interview, and that's when they hired me. They hired me, but they told me that I would have to take a little teller course. When I finished it, they give me a

diploma, and everything. It took about a month and a half. Even after I started at the bank, I kept working at Hecht's at night.

They started me out at $12,500 a year. That was in '86. I only stayed as a teller for nine months, though. That's the requirement. You have to be there for nine months before you get a promotion. I guess I was lucky. I was always on time, I was always at work, and that helped me a lot. I filled out an application for a position that was vacant in new accounts, and they gave me the job. While I was still a teller, they gave me a $500 raise after my six months' review. When they moved me to new accounts, they raised me another thousand and something. I've been there seven months now.

What I am trying to do now is to finish my degree in banking and to continue growing. Almost all of the bank officers started as tellers. There are lots of opportunities to grow. So far I've got eight credits. I need ten more to finish my [associate's] degree.

OTHER SERVICES

Seventeen study participants were employed in a variety of service jobs, most of them entailing extensive interaction with the public. Six involved retail sales, four were in hotels, three worked as beauticians, two as bank tellers, and one was in the army. Thirteen of the 17 were high school graduates. Three of the five persons working in retail sales got their first exposure to this field through internships arranged by MCIP. Two of the three beauticians also got started in their careers through MCIP internships.

Following is information about the service occupations of several study participants, including some we have met before.

Miguel Bustamante. Miguel Bustamante, husband of Linda Berlanga Bustamante (Chapter 5), worked as a bellman in a Georgetown hotel, a job he had held for two years at the time he was interviewed. Prior to that, Miguel had worked in restaurants as a kitchen helper and a chef, but left restaurant work after a dispute over pay. In 1987, Miguel earned his GED and started taking classes again. His goal was to become an accountant, the profession for which he had begun to study before leaving his native El Salvador.

Manolo Pérez. Manolo's work as assistant banquet manager was described earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 4. Although his primary source of income was from that job, Manolo's hope was

Table 25 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Involved in Miscellaneous Services

SEX	EDUCATION	JOB DESCRIPTION
M	Job Training	Bank Teller
F	Job Training	Beautician
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Hotel Bellman
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Front Desk Manager, Hotel
M	HS Graduate	Head Steward, Hotel
M	HS Graduate	Bellman, Hotel
F	HS Graduate	Cashier, Grocery Store
M	HS Graduate	Sales Clerk, Hardware Store
M	HS Graduate	Sales Clerk, Clothing Store
F	HS Graduate	Sales Clerk, Department Store
M	HS + Job Training	Sales Clerk, Drug Store
M	HS + Job Training	Sales Clerk, Tool Rental Company
M	HS + Job Training	U.S. Army
F	HS + Job Training	Beautician
F	HS + Job Training	Beautician
F	HS + Job Training	911 Operator
F	≥ 1 Year College	Bank Teller

* Twelve of the 17 study participants employed in "Other Services" were interviewed.

that his recently begun bank teller job would be the beginning a promising new career.

Tito Cortez. Tito Cortez (Chapter 3) began working as a hotel bellman when he dropped out of MCIP. Before dropping out, Tito supported himself and others in his family by working two jobs, one of which was full-time. He dropped out because he needed to earn still more money to send to his parents in El Salvador, who were desperate to escape the war-related violence in and around their village. After quitting school, Tito took another job as a hotel bellman and resigned himself to the fact that dropping out meant that his hope of becoming a nurse or paramedic probably would never be realized.

By early 1988, Tito had left his bellman job and had begun working as a front desk clerk at a nearby hotel. With a wife and two children to support, his new hope was to work his way into a better position in the hotel industry. Tito mused that he would like to become the manager of a hotel, but without an education, he thought this would be impossible. Upon further reflection, he concluded that to become a front desk manager would be more realistic.

Ana Ruiz. In 1988, Ana Ruiz was living with her mother, aunt and cousin in a small apartment. After arriving from El Salvador in 1981 at the age of sixteen, she seldom had ventured far from the neighborhood where she had lived, worked, and gone to school. Just prior to graduating from MCIP, Ana took a job as a cashier in a neighborhood grocery store. One day, as she was doing the shopping for her family, the owner of the store offered her a job. As more Latinos were moving into the neighborhood, the owner wanted someone who was bilingual to help her communicate with her new customers. Ana continued to work at that store from 1983 to 1987. She quit because of dissatisfaction with her wages and soon found a similar job at another grocery four blocks away.

In 1988, Ana's major disappointment was that she had not gone to college. After graduating from MCIP, an admissions counsellor at the University of the District of Columbia told her that she could not enroll because she was an undocumented alien. By 1988, Ana had became a legal resident, as had most other study participants. She was excited about her renewed possibility of going back to school, and intended to enroll in a business college that offered training in computer programming. As she was still single and living with her family, pursuing her education was a more viable alternative for Ana than for many others with greater financial responsibilities.

Skilled Labor (Miscellaneous)

Ten study participants, nine of them male, were working in various positions as skilled laborers. Few had intended to enter their current occupations while in high school. Most acquired their skills through on-the-job experience without the benefit of job training programs.

Only the two men who worked in electronics learned their skills through job training programs. One of the electronics workers was a 1984 graduate of MCIP. In 1988, he returned to the school for help in career development. MCIP placed him in a government-subsidized internship with an electric utility company where he was learning to become a lineman. The work experiences of Felipe Maldonado in electronics repair were reported earlier (Chapters 2, 5). For most, however, formal education had little to do with entry into these jobs. As we will see, Donnie Alvarez earns a good living as a tow truck driver. He started learning the skills of his trade as a boy, helping his father to maintain his taxicab. Others learned their skills on the job as adults. As illustrated by the story of Carlos Zapata, many learned through the "school of hard knocks."

Carlos Zapata. Carlos came to Washington from El Salvador in 1981 at the age of 17. His mother had come to work in the city six years earlier. She returned to retrieve her son when the war became more serious. Mrs. Zapata had already brought two of Carlos' brothers to Washington and, after Carlos, she would

Table 26 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Involved in Miscellaneous Skilled Labor

SEX	EDUCATION	JOB DESCRIPTION
F	Non-Grad No J.T.	Typesetter
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Body Shop Mechanic
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Warehouse Manager
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Upholsterer
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Printer
M	HS Graduate	Upholsterer
M	HS Graduate	Tow Truck Operator
M	Grad, + J.T.	Small Engine Mechanic
M	Grad + J.T.	Electronics Repair
M	Grad + J.T.	Electronics Repair

* Nine of the ten study participants working as skilled laborers were interviewed.

return again to retrieve two more of her children.

Carlos was a very good student in El Salvador. He had reached the tenth grade and was specializing in the study of agriculture. He lived with eleven of his cousins in the house of an uncle. When first interviewed in 1982, he explained he did not want to come to Washington and had told his mother that he wished to return home "as soon as things got better." He missed his friends and felt very confused and alone. He wrote in Spanish on a survey questionnaire while in high school:

> I am very grateful to this country for taking me in. It is very beautiful and peaceful here. It is beautiful, but at the same time, it is screwed up. There are too many people here who are dedicated to vice. But in this country, a young person has a chance to get ahead.

In 1982 Carlos entered MCIP where he began studying English as a second language and taking courses such as art and physical education -- courses that did not require advanced English skills. During his first year, he received awards for being a good student. As occurred with many others students, however, his grades gradually began to slip. He had difficulty learning English, and dropped out of MCIP in 1983.

In 1988, Carlos' was one of the least fluent in speaking English of all study participants. When interviewed in Spanish, he was very emotional when talking about the time that he spent at MCIP. On the shelves of the apartment he shared with his wife and daughter were trophies that he earned as a member of the school's soccer team. In a place of honor was a picture of don

Pedro, his teacher, confidant, and soccer coach at MCIP. Don Pedro died of a heart attack while Carlos was attending the school.

> I remember that when I started out at MCIP I felt disoriented because of the language but I did really well with the first courses that I took. After a while, when I started to get used to the way things were a little bit, I began to let my studies slip. My grades fell, and finally just quit. After dropping out, I wanted to go back and begin again, but that was impossible because I had to work. You had the chance to get into many beautiful careers at that school. But I left and didn't get into any of them --so I began to work in a bakery.
>
> I started working part-time at the bakery before I dropped out, and then I went to full-time. I worked for almost three years at the Hanover Pastry Shop. When I started, I didn't have any interest in becoming a pastry chef. But I had this opportunity, and I did a good job for them. I stayed there until '85, even though the pay was really bad. When I dropped out, I began working from twelve midnight until twelve noon. Later, I worked from five in the morning until three in the afternoon. They started me out at the minimum--$3.35 an hour. Later they raised me to $5.75.
>
> In '85 I left for the Napoli because it was a better position and much better paid. It is a very good restaurant, and they produce a lot in their bakery. I remember that a girl who worked there told me that they needed people like me. That's how I got the job.

In 1987, Carlos took on an additional part-time job supervising the pastry production of another restaurant in Georgetown.

> Now I'm doing OK with my salary, but I'm not really satisfied. I've been at the Napoli about two and a half years and am making $8.75 an hour. In Georgetown, I get more. I work eight hours a day, Monday through Saturday at the Napoli. In Georgetown, all I have to do is check out the desserts they are going to serve; I'm the supervisor. So I also do two or three hours a day over there [in addition to the eight hours at Napoli].

Despite his credentials as a pastry chef, Carlos remained unsatisfied with his work:

> I am not satisfied with what has happened since I left MCIP because I would like to improve myself in terms of my education and career. I would like to move into

another phase. I would like to study to do something that would be more difficult.

Despite these comments expressing dissatisfaction with his career, at the end of the interview Carlos proudly displayed a photo album with pictures of the pastries that he has produced and decorated.

Donnie Alvarez. Donnie Alvarez has been driving a tow truck since 1982 when he was in the eleventh grade. He came to Washington when he was very young and spent most of his life in the city. Donnie began working on cars as a child, helping his father, a taxi driver, to maintain his cab. Since his first job at the age of fourteen, Donnie had been employed by at least a dozen different garages and towing companies. By the time he graduated from MCIP in 1983, he already was earning $20,000 a year working after school and on weekends as a tow truck driver. When Donnie worked, he worked very hard, and earned a good income. In 1987, he took a year off and travelled to Texas, California, Mexico and Puerto Rico. After returning, he decided to teach karate (he had earned a black belt) at a local studio for the remainder of the year. Although he only earned a small fraction of what he made driving a tow truck, karate was one of Donnie's favorite activities. About his work as a tow truck operator, Donnie had the following comments:

> Driving a tow truck is alright. It's a way to make good money. The more hours you work, the more you make... Like all jobs, it has its ups and downs, so you can never be satisfied. God gives you a good day, and the next day, everything has gone to hell. It comes and goes, but I am satisfied. I make money, pay bills, save some money. I don't have to please no one except myself. So if I don't like something, I leave... I can get a job anywhere I want because of all the people I've met as the years have gone by. I know that if I am good to people, someday they will be good to me.
>
> In this game of towing, you have to know who you are working for. The man I'm working for has been in the business over 30 years, and knows everyone in Montgomery County [Maryland]. He's well established. If I ever wanted to open my own towing company, I could make plenty of money just by myself. But right now, it is easier to work for somebody else. No overhead. What I make, I make. [The owner of the business] pays the gas, he pays the truck. So I don't worry about any payments.
>
> In ten years, I would like to see myself retired. By the time I'm 35, I will be living comfortably.

Community Workers and Para-professionals (Non-Medical)

Two men and two women were working in community institutions as paraprofessionals. Maria Juarez worked as a paralegal and recently had completed a job training program offered by a community organization that provided legal aide to the Latino community. Although she dropped out of MCIP, she had completed twelve years of schooling in her native Guatemala. Maria worked for a monolingual, English speaking lawyer with many Spanish speaking clients.

Table 27 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Working as Para-Professionals and Community Workers

Sex	Education	Job Description
F	Non-Graduate	Youth Worker
F	Non-Graduate	Teacher's Aide
F	Non-Grad + J.T.	Paralegal
M	HS Graduate	Teacher's Aide

* All four study participants who worked as paraprofessionals and community workers were interviewed.

A second woman who did not graduate from high school was a youth worker, employed part-time by a community based organization. Two others worked as teacher's aides. One did so primarily to assist her daughter's kindergarten teacher. Although she received minimal pay, her husband earned a good living as a construction worker. The other teacher's aide had worked for several years as supervisor for a landscaping company. He deeply regretted that he did not continue his schooling after graduating from MCIP. In 1988, he quit his landscaping job and began working as a aide in the hope that it would help him get back into the field of education. His dream was to become a physical education instructor.

Other Labor

Eleven males worked as laborers in positions not requiring special skills or training. Seven of the eleven were drop-outs. Most of the seven who were interviewed considered their current jobs to be only temporary means of supporting themselves before they moved on to something else. This was the case with Ramón

Puente (Chapter 4), Freddy Sepulveda and Tomás Cavasos. Dennis Chávez, however, was concerned that he would become stuck as a house painter. Parts of their stories are presented below.

Table 28 -- Sex and Educational Status of Study Participants Working as Laborers

SEX	EDUCATION	JOB DESCRIPTION
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Painter
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Painter
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Parking Attendant
M	Non-Grad, No J.T.	Landscape Laborer
M	Job Training Only	Painter
M	Job Training Only	Painter
M	Grad + J T	Parking Attendant
M	HS Graduate	Parking Attendant
M	HS Graduate	Courier, Travel Agency
M	HS Graduate	Warehouse Worker
M	>1 Yr College	Warehouse Worker

* Seven of the eleven study participants who were laborers were interviewed.

Freddy Sepulveda. In 1988, Freddy Sepulveda was working as a parking lot attendant. After attending MCIP for two years, he took the GED exam and passed it. He had decided not to wait to graduate from MCIP because he wanted to join the National Guard as soon as possible. His dream was to become a pilot. When interviewed, Freddy already had completed his six months of basic training in the Guard and had received additional training as a helicopter mechanic. He had not been accepted, however, for flight training. Whether or not the Guard would eventually train him as a pilot, Freddy was determined to fly and was glad that he at least had been trained in aircraft maintenance. Until further opportunities developed, Freddy was content to work temporarily as a parking lot attendant.

Tomás Cavasos. Tomás worked as a painter as a means of saving money to return to the Dominican Republic. He planned to rejoin his father, who was a small but successful farmer. He hoped to learn farming from him and, when his father became too old, take charge of the land.

Tomás had come to Washington in 1981 at the age of 16 after completing the eleventh grade. He had hoped to continue his

education in the United States and then return to his country with a career by which he could earn a good living. Unfortunately for Tomás, he was placed in the seventh grade when he enrolled in school in Washington. Worse, he was sent to a junior high school that lacked a strong program in bilingual education or English as a second language. Although he had been a good student in his country, Tomás did poorly in junior high school, primarily because of the language barrier. After one year, he transferred to MCIP, but stayed for only two semesters. Tomás liked the school and felt that he was learning, but by that time had decided that he was too old to be in high school. He believed that he could not afford to not be working full-time.

After dropping out, Tomás held several jobs, including working in a car wash, commercial housekeeping, minor home remodelling, and the cleaning of tour busses. In his current job as a painter, he earned $6.50 an hour. Along with his wife and baby, he lived in a house that was owned by his mother and shared with two other brothers. All but Tomás' wife contributed to meeting the household budget, which enabled Tomás slowly to save money so that he and his family could return to his native land.

Dennis Chávez. In contrast to informants such as Tomás, who saw their labor as a means to an end, Dennis Chávez was very concerned about both his present and future employment. When Dennis first arrived in Washington, he stayed with an uncle. After a short while, however, the uncle moved away and Dennis, still a young teenager, was on his own. In 1981, Dennis enrolled in MCIP. Largely because of his need to work and the absence of family, he did poorly in his studies and soon dropped out. He re-enrolled briefly in 1983, but was unable to make any progress in school. His hope to obtain some training in electronics went nowhere.

In 1988, Dennis was married, the father of two children, and working as a house pai[illegible]. As he reflected on his high school experiences, he recalled that an internship at an auto parts store was one of the best things that had happened to him.

> I liked that job and I was happy in what I was doing. I was glad that I was able to do better in that job than I was doing in school. The point was that I started to understand that if I really wanted something, I could learn things. It made me feel competent and well prepared as a worker.

However, Dennis had to leave that job when he dropped out of MCIP.

> I learned a little bit at MCIP, but I wasn't able to develop very much. All I got out of high school was that I was able to get out of one little corner and move to another. I advanced a little, but I didn't get far enough. Things went very bad for me there. Bad

luck, bad friends. I lost everything then.

Dennis' hopes for the future were modest.

> I hope to survive. One of the biggest problems for me is to not lose confidence in myself. To make it in this country, you have to have a good education. You need a good job, and you need to have somebody there to help you when you need it. A lot of us Latinos have problems with the same things: money and papers. Maybe with the new [1986 immigration] law, the problem with the papers will be taken care of. But for people who came after me [after 1981] -- they are going to be living at the same time in this country and in another. That is something that can really screw you up. It can really confuse you. Education is the only way that you can be somebody here.

Chapter Summary

In 1988, nearly all study participants were working, most in jobs that provided an income well above the poverty line. Few were still in the entry level jobs that most had held in high school. Classroom-based vocational instruction and career internships in high school and after were important in providing access to skilled employment for many. Most men who did not graduate from high school, and who did not receive vocational training, were able to find employment in relatively high paying jobs in fields such as construction and as waiters. However, the employment of women in jobs providing an adequate income depended much more upon the acquisition of jobs skills through short-term job training and associate degree programs.

Chapter 6

Passages of At-Risk Adolescents from Adolescence to Adulthood

The stories of the young Latinos presented in this report describe a series of passages: the journey from Latin America to Washington; the transition from being an immigrant to a member of a minority group within U.S. society; and maturation from adolescence to adulthood. As is the case with most change, these passages implied both risk and opportunity. Most of the young people described here left their countries in the early 1980s. Usually accompanied by one or more family members, they arrived in Washington with little money and little knowledge of the English language or the ways of North American cities.

In Chapter 1, we are introduced to the young Latinos whose experiences over a period of six years this report describes. Chapter 1 also presents the objectives of the report, describes the research methods upon which the report is based, and discusses certain key concepts and theories that are useful in understanding the challenges facing at-risk youths. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the geographic and social passages of study participants from their native countries to Washington, and the challenges they faced in the city during their adolescence. Chapters 4 and 5 review the educational and employment status of study participants as young adults, and factors influencing their career paths and educational histories. In this final chapter, the social and cultural dimensions of their incorporation into U.S. society are reviewed, including family and social life, degree of satisfaction with what has happened to them since leaving high school, perceptions of challenges that they and other young Latinos face, and hopes for the future. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of the risk for becoming trapped in long-term poverty, and how the support of family, friends, community organizations and publicly funded programs enabled most to successfully negotiate the difficult passage from adolescence to adulthood.

Residence. Eighty-one percent (146) of the original 181 study participants who were first contacted in 1982 were known to still be living in metropolitan Washington in 1988. Of those, less than half (49%) continued to live in the District of Columbia where nearly all resided as teenagers. Thirty-five percent of study participants had moved to the Maryland suburbs and 16% were living in Virginia. A majority of District residents lived in the Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan neighborhoods, generally considered to be the heart of the city's Latino community. Despite the relatively high concentration of Latinos in these areas, both neighborhoods are racially and ethnically mixed. Housing costs, particularly in Adams Morgan, have risen sharply during the 1980s,

causing many who originally settled in the central city to move to less expensive dwellings scattered throughout the suburbs. Clusters of study participants were found in Silver Spring and Gaithersburg, Maryland, and in Falls Church, Virginia.

Most interviewees lived in rented apartments. Married interviewees generally lived with their spouses and children, although some shared their dwellings with other family members and occasionally with friends. Sharing apartments with others enabled persons with relatively low incomes to be able to afford better housing. Although the housing observed during interviews with study participants varied somewhat, the dwellings of most could be characterized as modest, but pleasant. Seven of the 112 interviewees (all married) lived in detached houses, townhouses, or condominium apartments that they had purchased with their own earnings. At least seven others lived in, and contributed to the support of, houses owned by their extended families.

Friendship Groups. During their leisure time, a majority of study participants chose to interact primarily, if not exclusively, with other Latinos. When asked to describe the ethnicity of their friends, 62% stated that all of their friends were Latino, 36% reported an ethnically mixed friendship group, and only 2% said that most of their friends were not Latinos. High school graduates were more likely than drop-outs to have friends of different ethnic backgrounds ($X^2 = 6.2$, $p.<.05$, 1 d.f.). Forty-six percent of graduates stated that they had at least one friend who was not Latino, compared to only 21% of high school drop-outs.

Domestic Status. By 1988, a majority of study participants were either married or parents responsible for the care of at least one child. Forty-two percent (67/159) of those whose domestic status was known were currently married. Thirty-four of the married study participants were women and 33 were men. Eighty-one percent had married a spouse who also was Latino, but only 45% were married to someone from the same country. The most common types of marriages between interviewees of different nationalities were between Salvadoreans and Guatemalans (6), Salvadoreans and Dominicans (4), and Salvadoreans and non-Latino North Americans (3).

One-half (35/70) of the women whose domestic status was known were mothers. Sixty-three percent (22) of the mothers were married, 26% (9) had never been married, and 11% (4) were divorced. Thirty-six percent (13/36) of women who were not currently married were mothers. More information on single mothers will be presented below.

Formal Organizations. The majority of interviewees (63%) belonged to no formal organizations of any kind, whether church, athletic team, community organization, or other group. There was no significant difference in organization membership between interviewees who were high school graduates and non-graduates.

Forty-one interviewees reported belonging to a total of 51 organizations.

Most Protestant and Catholic church congregations to which interviewees belonged were predominantly Latino. Women reported belonging to a church only slightly more often than men.

Table 29 -- Formal Organizations To Which Interviewees Belonged

Type of Organization	N	%*
Catholic Church	18	16%
Protestant Church	14	13%
Soccer Teams	7	6%
Fitness Clubs	6	5%
Latino Theatre Group	1	1%
Latino Dance Group	1	1%
Latino Youth Group	1	1%
Neighborhood Swim Club	1	1%
Company Bowling Team	1	1%
Tenant Association	1	1%

* Percentage of 112 persons interviewed who reported belonging to each type of organization. Some interviewees reported belonging to more than one organization. Seventy-one of 112 interviewees belonged to no organization.

Church membership was an important source of social support for many study participants such as Edgar Garza (Chapter 3) and Laura Benitez (Chapter 5). Most of the fourteen persons belonging to Protestant churches stated that they had converted to their Protestant denomination after coming to Washington. As with church membership, common culture and language also influenced membership in athletic clubs and teams. The soccer teams to which interviewees belonged were entirely comprised of Latino men. Three men and three women reported that they were paying members of fitness clubs.

Satisfaction with Work and Education.

Although important for both sexes, education was particularly crucial for the employment and income of women. Men generally were able to find jobs that required little formal education (e.g. restaurant waiter, construction), provided at least a moder-

ate level of income, and offered some possibility of upward mobility. However, no women worked in construction, and few were employed in the better paying restaurant jobs.

Specific information on income was obtained from 73 of the 112 interviewees. Additional information was gathered from 35 others who characterized their earnings more generally as "poor," "adequate," or "good." Only 40% of study participants earning over $7.50 an hour were women, as compared to 64% who earned less than $5.50 an hour. Most of the women earning over $7.50 were secretaries and health care workers, and had received training in those fields. Although many men who earned at least $7.50 also were trained in health care, electronics, and other fields, many others in that wage group worked in construction, restaurants, and warehouse jobs that required neither formal education nor job training. One-third of men who reported earning at least $9.50 an hour were high school drop-outs. In contrast, all of the women who earned $9.50 or more an hour had graduated from high school.

Table 30 -- Interviewees' Pay

Wages	N	%
Less than $4.00	3	3%
$4.00 to $5.50	11	10%
$5.51 TO $7.50	14	13%
$7.51 TO $9.50	17	16%
$9.50 OR MORE	28	26%
"POOR"	3	3%
"ADEQUATE"	24	22%
"GOOD"	8	7%
	108	100%

Surprisingly few interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with their pay. Those who were unhappy with their jobs were more likely to have complained about the work, itself, rather than the wages. In Chapter 5, we found that a "good job" was not defined solely in terms of income. Many earning relatively good wages as waiters, chefs and construction workers stated that they would have preferred employment in the professional positions to which they aspired in high school. Interviewees frequently expressed a wish to work in a better job where they would be respected for what they knew rather than merely for how hard they worked. Several

mentioned that even though they might earn more money in the short-term as construction laborers or in restaurant work, they believed that jobs requiring an education were best in the long run.

When questioned in 1988 about how they would evaluate their current educational and employment status, most were not satisfied with the amount of education that they had received. They were more satisfied, however, with progress they had made in their careers.

Table 31 -- Interviewees' Satisfaction with Education and Employment in 1988

Degree of Satisfaction	N*	(%)
Very Satisfied with Education and Employment	51	48%
Somewhat satisfied with Education and Employment	18	17%
Satisfied with Employment but Not with Education	17	16%
Satisfied with Education but not with Employment	2	2%
Not Satisfied with Either Education or Employment	18	17%
	106	100%

* Six of 112 interviewees expressed no opinion.

That study participants felt they had been more successful in earning a living than in getting education is reflected in responses to two questions.

> Have there been any major disappointments in your life since leaving high school?
>
> What are some of the good things that have happened to you since leaving high school?

Sixty-seven of the 112 interviewees mentioned having one or more major disappointments since leaving MCIP. Nearly half (40) of the 87 disappointments mentioned referred to not having been able to continue with their education. Ten of those who mentioned education as having been a major disappointment explained that

they had been prevented from continuing their studies because of problems with their immigration status. Only 12 of 87 responses to the question referred to disappointments with current or previous jobs, or with wages.

In response to the second question 90 of 112 interviewees mentioned at least one "good thing" that had happened to them since leaving high school. By far, the most frequently cited was finding their current job.

Table 32 -- Disappointments of Interviewees Since Leaving High School

Disappointments	N	%
Education	40	46%
Family Problems	11	13%
Death in the Family	9	10%
Immigration Problems	7	8%
Dislike Current Job	6	7%
Illness/Accident	4	5%
Lost job	3	3%
Insufficient Income	3	3%
Other	4	5%
	87	100%

Table 33 -- Good things that Have Happened to Interviewees Since Leaving High School

"Good Things"	N	%
Finding Current Job	41	32%
Birth of a Child	26	20%
Getting Married	16	13%
Education	14	11%
Travel	8	6%
Buying Home	5	4%
Learning English	5	4%
Learning Job Skills	4	3%
U.S. Citizenship	3	2%
Other	6	5%
	128	100%

Aspirations and Achievements

When first contacted in 1982 and 1983, 78% of study participants said they hoped to enter a professional field such as computer science, engineering, medicine, nursing or dentistry. In 1988, although only a minority had even begun to get the post-secondary education necessary to achieve those goals, few had become trapped in the poverty that most had known as teenagers after arriving in Washington. With the exception of three women who were new mothers, one man who was recovering from a construction injury, and one woman who was looking for work, all interviewees were employed; 93% in full-time jobs. Very few still worked in the same kinds of entry-level jobs that sustained them while in high school, such as office cleaning and dish washing. While few informants had made much progress toward a bachelor's degree, job training programs, vocational instruction, and associate degree programs played an important role in providing access to promising careers.

When the 112 interviewees were asked about their hopes, 111 responded by mentioning 167 hopes for the future. Their responses generally indicated a desire to settle in, settle down and get ahead. Many still maintained the long deferred hope, first expressed in high school, of entering a professional career. As many informants recently had acquired their legal residency papers, some were hopeful that they would finally be able to do so. For many who had already started families, however, returning to school to prepare for a profession no longer seemed practical.

Despite the deferral or abandonment by many of career choices as a result of immigration problems and the financial responsibilities of child care, the hopes of most informants still conformed to very traditional North American aspirations: an education, a good career, a family, and home ownership. The great majority of interviewees (90%) expressed optimism about the future. This optimism is reflected in the comments of Ricardo Elizondo. As reported in Chapter 5, Ricardo was a construction worker who had not graduated from high school. Although he earned a good income, he was not satisfied with what he had achieved. Nonetheless, Ricardo was optimistic that, with continued hard work and the support of family and friends, he would be able to achieve more in the years to come:

> If you want to get somewhere, you have to be optimistic. You always have to be looking to see what is your next step. For me it's like a stairway. When you begin a job, you begin at the bottom, but start climbing toward the top. You have to work hard, and you have to be an optimist. But if one person has a problem, then we all have to be united. That's what your friends and your family are for -- to counsel you and to be there to help when you need it.
>
> My goal is to always keep going up. It doesn't matter

what the job is. I have to keep rising one way or another. My life is to be always moving from something small to something a little bit larger -- and to just keep going. To keep on rising and to keep on hoping....

Table 34 -- Interviewees' Hopes for the Future

Hopes	N	%
Future Professional Career	32	19%
Have Family	21	13%
Professional Education	18	11%
Own Business	17	10%
Get Any "Good" Career	17	10%
More Education (any type)	14	8%
Own Home	12	7%
Return to Native Country	8	5%
Develop Current Professional Career	7	4%
Develop Current Non-Professional Career	5	3%
More Money	5	3%
Residency Papers	3	2%
Retire Before 40	3	2%
Visit Native Country	3	2%
Get High School Degree	2	1%
	167	100%

Challenges Facing Young Latinos

Nearly all interviewees said that they believed there were many opportunities in Washington for people like themselves, this despite the major serious challenges they face. Interviewees were asked, What are the biggest challenges confronting young Latinos such as yourself? Eighty-four of the 112 persons interviewed provided 178 responses that were sorted into the categories listed in Table 35.

The most frequently mentioned challenges related to alcohol and drug abuse. Many described how such problems affected close relatives and friends. Several reported having overcome their own serious substance abuse problems. Indeed, one of the original 181 study participants reportedly died in 1985 of a drug overdose. Interviewees often associated alcohol and drug abuse with the challenges of overcoming negative peer pressure and the need to

Table 35 -- Challenges Facing Young Latinos According to Interviewees

Challenge	N	%
Drug and Alcohol Abuse	33	18%
Setting Goals/accepting responsibility	26	15%
Getting an Education	23	13%
Learning English	17	9%
Negative Peer Pressure	16	9%
Working Hard	14	8%
Acculturation Conflict	10	6%
Immigration problems	9	5%
Discrimination/Prejudice	7	4%
Finding a Good Job	7	4%
Making money	6	3%
Loneliness	5	3%
Remaining Optimistic	3	2%
Learning about Opportunities	2	1%
	178	100%

set goals and to accept responsibility. Jorge Garza, Sal Bolaños and others previously described how they deliberately tried to separate themselves, socially and geographically, from their former friends as a way to overcome these problems. Edgar Garza described how a church youth group had helped him re-adjust his priorities. Others simply stated that avoiding the drug and alcohol problems that had affected some of their friends and close relatives was primarily a matter of personal commitment, setting goals, and not forgetting the importance of one's education and career. Several interviewees expressed the belief that drug and alcohol abuse were becoming an even more serious problem for younger Latinos, especially those who had lived in Washington for a greater portion of their lives.

Santos Lara is an MCIP graduate who by 1988 had been working for five years as an assistant store manager in the same Washington neighborhood where he and most informants lived when they were in high school. Santos describes below some of the differences he sees between Latino adolescents of the early 1980s, and those of 1988.

> When we came [to Washington] in 1980 a whole generation was coming. We were experiencing a new life, a new education, right? These kids now in high school have spent more time in the US. [When they enrolled] they had an idea of what high school was going to be, but we

didn't have any idea.... We experienced something together. We got close, but I guess that [current Latino high school students] don't get close. Maybe it's because they are more American [than we were].... They are more liberal. When we came in 1980, if someone was smoking marijuana, it was scary or a surprise. Now they can smoke or they can drink more openly.

Santos and other interviewees recalled that the long working hours of parents, guardians, and the youths, themselves, too often resulted in a lack of communication within the family. Communication was made even more difficult by the faster pace at which most teenagers learned the English language and U.S. culture as compared to their parents or guardians. Santos believed that lack of communication within the family had been a problem for many of his former classmates and continued to be a problem for young Latinos in 1988.

[Many Latino kids] want to be independent and they don't want to listen to what their parents say, or what their big brothers say, or what big friends say. They think that they have the world in their hands. That's where they go bad, because I can see it with about 15 or 20 kids who come in the store. Their mothers complain to me about them. I try to tell [the kids] "don't do this," over and over. The problem is that they don't listen. They just hang out.

Sometimes I talk to a kid alone and tell him what's wrong with him and [later] I can see a lot of change. I see an improvement. The parents need someone to talk with [their kids]. Very seriously. When there is no communication, no relation, it is a disaster.

Marcos Morales (Chapter 2 and 3), another knowledgeable observer of life on the streets, commented about the lure of drugs[1]. Like other informants, Marcos noted that many youths arrive in Washington with lots of problems, and for some, life does not get much easier.

Every teenager has to go through that (drugs), and it will be up to every teenager to cope with those things. There are guys who get stuck on that and there are guys who go through it. For society, it's bad. It's the worst. But at the time you live through that, it's not bad. I mean, it's fun! Everything is Party! Party! Party! Party, all the time. But you have to realize that you cannot live like that. If that were life, the whole world would be screwed up. But when the world is screwed up for you already anyway, it looks pretty good....

Other frequently cited challenges, such as getting an education, finding a good job, and the social, cultural and psychological aspects of adapting to U.S. society, have been addressed in previous chapters. The most frequently cited challenges appeared to conform to a common theme: that is, the need to maintain faith in oneself and in one's future. Although factors beyond their control were sometimes mentioned (e.g. discrimination, immigration problems, inadequate employment possibilities), it is significant that those most frequently mentioned were ones that young Latinos, themselves, could control. That challenges such as setting goals, accepting responsibility, substance abuse, negative peer pressure, working hard, and getting an education were the most frequently mentioned suggests that study participants believed that *they* were primarily responsible for their own futures; this, despite the formidable economic, cultural, and political barriers that have been in their way. Even when citing instances in which they had experienced discrimination or exploitation on the job, many expressed the conviction that they could not afford to let these problems interfere with their efforts to achieve their goals. This is illustrated by the comments of Daniel Montes.

Daniel Montes. In 1988, Daniel was a 23 years old married high school graduate. In the past year he also had completed a training program in diesel mechanics at a private trade school, and had begun working for a power tool rental company. He was happy with his new job where his beginning salary was nearly $10 an hour. His goal was to one day open a automobile towing and repair business. Below, he discusses the challenges facing young Latinos in a way that reflected the views of many:

> Oh, there are a lot of things, especially for young people my age. [Many] are motivated to take drugs--the easy way, the easy life. You know, go party and enjoy life like everybody else. Trying to get mature when there are a lot of attractions is not easy. I think that the biggest problems are drugs, finding jobs, and taking things for serious -- having the will to be somebody, to move up.

In the seven years since he arrived in Washington from El Salvador at the age of 16, Daniel could easily have become discouraged about his chances of "becoming somebody," stopped "taking things for serious," and lost his will to "move up." While enrolled as a full-time student at MCIP in 1983, he worked 40 hours a week as a chef after school and on weekends. He earned $5.00 an hour and received no benefits. After working at the same restaurant for two years, Daniel was fired. The boss accused him of stealing food from the kitchen, but Daniel described what he thought was the real reason:

> They were talking to us about a union for workers so I went to a couple of meetings. I wanted to know what

was going on. They found out about that and so they were looking for a chance to fire me. One night they said I was taking something out of the place, and they didn't give me a chance to explain anything. So they did it (fired him).

After graduating from high school, Daniel began his training in diesel mechanics. To support himself while in school, he took another restaurant job, this time as a weekend busboy.

It was kind of hard. I worked three days a week, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, from four until two in the morning. I was getting paid just a dollar an hour plus tips, which meant I got $25 or $30 a day for ten hours of work. This was in '86.

He went on to describe why his pay was so low:

There are a lot of things -- a lot of controversial things that you face. Like sometimes you get people who treat you wrong because they think you are from some other place and they think you are just coming to steal jobs and destroy. Like the manager at [that restaurant]. He was just abusing a lot of people, Spanish people who worked in there. He tried to pay them cheap, steal hours, and get cheap labor. Trying to take advantage of the situation -- and so on and so on.

[Over the years] a lot of things have happened. Sometimes people call you things even though you haven't done anything [to bother them]. Sometimes the ones who are saying these things are racists, but you have to have an open mind. It's not the same thing with everybody. When something really happens like that (discrimination), then you need to talk to the individual about the problem you are dealing with. A lot of people try to take advantage of you when they see that you are a foreigner. But then again, there are a lot of people that respect you and try to help you out.

So, like I say, there are a lot of chances and opportunities here, too, you know. You can get things that you never had in your life, things that you never thought that you could have. They say that this is the land of opportunity, and it is true -- but it all depends on you. If you are willing to take the opportunity, you can learn and you can make it. But if you don't want it, then you can't make it -- you're just a failure. So, you have to take a chance.

Risk of Entrapment in Long-Term Poverty

Before leaving their countries for the United States, most study participants spent their childhoods in households with few economic resources and little formal education. Most arrived in Washington as teenagers in the early 1980s, many as *de facto* refugees from the war-related violence of Central America. Few of the youths, however, were recognized as refugees by the U.S. government. As a consequence, many had to bear the burden of being considered illegal aliens during their adolescent years. While attending high school, they were among the economically poorest residents of the District of Columbia. In addition, most were handicapped by not knowing English or the ways of urban North American life. Few lived in homes where the father was present. Some Latino adolescents lived alone or with friends. Besides the problems unique to them as impoverished immigrants, they also had to address many of the challenges confronting other low income and minority youths living in inner city environments.

Study participants have described in this report many of the characteristics that placed them at risk of becoming trapped in long-term poverty. As they passed from adolescence to young adulthood, however, most worked hard and successfully to avoid that result. Nonetheless, the fact that 39% had not graduated from high school by 1988, and 36% of single women were mothers responsible both for child care and the provisioning of their households gives cause for concern. A disproportionate number of single mothers and high school drop-outs continued to live in the District of Columbia. Nearly half (47%) of all study participants who continued to reside in the central city had not completed high school. In comparison, only 39% of Maryland residents and 25% of those living in Virginia did not complete high school. Seventy-seven percent (10/13) of single mothers resided in the central city as compared to only 41% (9/22) of married mothers.

Education. As discussed in Chapter 5, most men with little education had been able to find jobs paying wages well above the poverty line. That jobs were available to such men is not surprising in light of the fact that 30% of all the jobs available in metropolitan Washington area do not require a high school education (Bendick and Egan 1988:5). Many of these jobs were in two occupational groups in which a majority of informants had worked while they were still in high school: restaurant and cleaning services. Although the starting wages in most of these jobs are low, even study participants who did not graduate from high school or receive any post-secondary education were able to leave fields that offered little opportunity for upward mobility (e.g. cleaning) and had moves on to better things. They remained, however, in other fields, such as restaurant work, where they were able to achieve some upward mobility. Most who were employed in restaurants in 1988 had worked their way into jobs paying wages well above the poverty line. Men with little education

also found work in other relatively lucrative jobs, such as in construction.

Thus, the strong economy of metropolitan Washington provided adequate, although often unsatisfying employment even to the least educated men. However, for women, lack of education was a potentially more serious problem. Although women were no more likely to have graduated from high school than men, they were more likely to have completed some form of post-secondary educational program, especially a short-term job training program. As described in Chapters 4 and 5, job training programs provided access to jobs with an adequate income for many women who were otherwise at risk of becoming trapped in poverty. Twelve of 40 interviewees who did not graduate from high school had completed a post-secondary job training program and were working in related employment. Fourteen had participated in some type of career development activity at MCIP before dropping out. Altogether, 55% (22/40) of interviewees who did not graduate from high school either had received some type of job training before dropping out of MCIP or had completed a post-secondary job training program.

Single Mothers. Women who were mothers, married or single, were the least likely to have graduated from high school or to have received any post-secondary education. Only 43% (15/35) of all mothers had completed high school or earned a GED, compared to 80% (28/35) of childless women. There was little difference in the rate of high school completion for single and married mothers. Forty-six percent (6/13) of unmarried mothers were graduates, compared to 41% (9/22) who were married. Childless married women were the most likely to be graduates, 92% (11/12) of whom had completed high school or earned a GED.

Seventy percent (21/30) of all childless women whose post-secondary educational status was known had completed a job training program, associate degree or at least one year of college, but only 44% (14/32) of mothers had done so. There was little difference in the post-secondary educational accomplishments of married and unmarried women. Rather, motherhood appeared to be the primary determinant of post-secondary educational accomplishments.

Childless women were much more satisfied with their educational and employment status than were mothers. Seventy-eight percent (21/27) of childless interviewees who were women indicated that they were satisfied with both their post-secondary education and employment. In marked contrast, only 42% (13/31) of mothers were satisfied with both their education and employment. Marital status made no difference in the responses of interviewees to this question. Although childless women were more satisfied with their employment and educational status than were mothers, no mother expressed any regrets about having had children. Several did say, however, that they wished they had deferred childbearing until they were more secure economically. Childbirth was cited by many women, single and married, as the primary reason why they had dropped out of high school. It should be recalled that the average age of study participants when first contacted while

enrolled at MCIP in 1982 was 17.5 years, considerably older than most U.S. high school students. Because of their age, it is not surprising that childbirth was an important cause of school leaving for female study participants.

Although, understandably, motherhood inhibited the progress of these young women in their careers and with their education, most married mothers were able to rely upon the economic, social and emotional support of their husbands. Most single women faced greater hardships, but, with few exceptions, found alternative sources of support from within their own families. Parts of the stories of four single mothers already were presented. Marisol López (Chapter 3) became pregnant after leaving MCIP. In 1988 she was utilizing in her work the secretarial skills she had previously acquired at MCIP. She had become one of the most successful study participants in terms of her employment and income. Marisol was the director of membership services for a Washington based national association with over 300,000 members. Lupe Serrano (Chapter 3) arrived in Washington from El Salvador in 1980 at the age of 19, already a single mother. By 1988, she had graduated from high school, and was enrolled in a career development program offered by MCIP. Because of immigration problems, she had been working as a domestic since 1983. She recently had qualified for permanent residence status and was about to retrieve her son whom she had not seen since coming to Washington. Lupe was pursuing a career in nursing.

Rosalba Pérez (Chapter 3) described how she became discouraged when she separated and later was divorced from the father of her child. After graduating from MCIP, she struggled for five years working as a cashier and hotel housekeeper in order to support herself and her child. In 1987, she returned to MCIP and was placed in an on-the-job training program that enabled her to develop the secretarial skills that she had begun to learn in high school. After completing the on-the-job training, she got a job as a poorly paid receptionist. By 1988, however, she was employed as a secretary and her salary had risen to an adequate level well above the poverty line. Yanira Alvarez (Chapter 4) had her baby at the age of 16 while still enrolled at MCIP. As with Rosalba, her family helped her financially and with the care of her child. In 1988, she was earning a good income as a travel agent. Other single mothers were employed in the following occupations: receptionist, paralegal, nursing assistant, secretary (3), practical nurse, and domestic worker (2). Lupe Serrano and the other two women who were domestic workers chose that occupation primarily because of problems with their immigration status.

Although most of the single mothers faced great difficulties, with the assistance of their families and job training programs run by institutions in their communities, a majority have fared reasonably well. Two of the single mothers, however, experienced especially serious problems. Nilda Sánchez first became pregnant while a student at MCIP. At that time, she decided to drop out and marry the father. By 1988, she was divorced and the mother of three. The father of her third child had been deported because

he was an illegal alien. Nilda had experienced serious medical problems and had spent some time in a homeless shelter. She recently had begun to work as a nursing assistant and, with the help of a program administered by a Latino community organization, was upgrading her skills in nursing. Sara Osorio, the woman who worked as a receptionist, had experienced both immigration problems and severe financial difficulties. In 1988, she was planning to return to live in Central America.

Immigration Status. Perhaps the most serious problem that young Latinos in this study have had to overcome is with their immigration status. As has been described in previous chapters, most maintained their conviction that hard work and, when possible, study would enable them to "get ahead" in their careers and, one day, "to become somebody" in their new society. Many who maintained this belief had lived in the city for several years without legal documentation. During the critical period of transition from of adolescence to adulthood, these young people were vulnerable to exploitation in the work place, and were denied access to some educational opportunities, especially the chance to enroll in the local public university. Nonetheless by 1988, the great majority of study participants had become legal residents of the United States. For most, their belief that hard work and study would eventually have its rewards was finally beginning to prove correct. For others who arrived in the United States after the January 1, 1982 cut-off date for the amnesty provision of the 1986 immigration law, however, this may not be the case. If young Latinos perceive that there is little likelihood they will be recognized as legal residents and thereby have a chance to legitimately participate in the country's economic and social system, the attractions of the streets discussed by Daniel Montes, Marcos Morales and Santos Lara may become harder to resist. Legal denial of the opportunity to legitimately succeed is likely to lead to the economic and social margination of large numbers of undocumented Latino youths in Washington. Although few of the participants in this study showed signs of becoming trapped in persistent poverty, others who are denied the right to participate in mainstream economic and social institutions are likely to form the core of an emerging Latino underclass in the city.

The Passage of At-Risk Youths to Adulthood

Through their schooling and experiences on the job, most of the young Latinos in this study learned how to become competent participants in adult roles in their new society. Although most had been unable to enter the careers of their high school ambitions, virtually all were working. Most had entered careers with potential for upward mobility, or worked in jobs paying substantially above the poverty line. The successful integration of most study participants into mainstream economic and social institutions indicates that the presence of risk factors for persistent

poverty in a population does not necessarily mean that most, or even many, will become trapped at the margins of society. What explains the successful passage of these at-risk youths from adolescence to young adulthood?

A Strong Economy. Throughout the 1980s, the economy of metropolitan Washington was booming. Even during the early 1980s when the country was in a recession, economic and employment growth in the Washington area continued (Bendick and Egan 1988:5). In the latter half of the decade, economic analysts were discussing a growing problem with labor shortages. Youths in this study who received employment training or post-secondary education found jobs in fields such as health care, clerical work and banking. Even those who did not receive training had little trouble finding employment.

The Motivation of Immigrants. It is sometimes argued that the relative success of immigrants in emerging from the poverty conditions in which they lived after first arriving in a new society is related to the personality traits of the immigrants, themselves. For example, it has been argued that immigrants tend to be especially ambitious and industrious people (Kuznets 1964:7; Butterworth and Chance 1981:62). A process of self-selection occurs as the most ambitious members of a society choose to leave their native countries to search for opportunity elsewhere. Also, as was discussed in Chapter 1, it has been argued that immigrants react differently than others to poverty conditions in the host society because their frame of reference remains the difficult conditions of their country of origin (Ogbu 1978:24). To what extent do these arguments apply to the participants in this study?

Most of the young Latinos in this study were not primarily responsible for the decision to come to Washington. They were sent or taken from their countries as minors by parents or other relatives, primarily to escape war-related violence. When first contacted in 1982 shortly after most had arrived, 85% stated that they hoped to return to live in their native countries some day. Despite the initiative and determination that these young Latinos demonstrated during the 1980s, it would be inaccurate to conclude that most came to the United States primarily because of their ambition to get ahead. Nonetheless, their behavior largely conforms to Ogbu's model of an immigrant minority (1978:24), as discussed in Chapter 1.

Although most study participants initially occupied the lowest positions in the economic and social hierarchy of the city, nearly all have avoided becoming trapped in the poverty in which most lived as adolescents. According to Ogbu, immigrant minorities:

> tend to have instrumental attitudes toward their host society and its institutions. Such attitudes enable them to accept and even anticipate prejudice and dis-

> crimination as the price of achieving their ultimate objectives.... Their hosts may regard the jobs held by immigrants as difficult and demeaning, but the latter may find such tasks relatively easy and the pay high in comparison with what they received at home; so they feel happy with their work and attempt to please their employers with enthusiasm and diligence.
>
> A comparison of the attitudes of caste[2] and immigrant minorities will show that the two groups tend to react to the same social situation differently. Unlike the caste groups, immigrant minorities operate outside the beliefs of an established system of social hierarchy, and are not deeply affected by the ideology of superiority and inferiority that supports such a hierarchy.

By Washington standards, many of the young Latinos in this study worked extraordinarily hard for very low pay. They tolerated conditions that few other Washingtonians would be likely to accept, yet few abandoned hope of eventual reward. Most acquired the knowledge and job skills they needed to get ahead.

Family, School and Community Based Organizations as Mediating Structures. In addition to the general prosperity of metropolitan Washington and the disposition of these immigrant youths for hard work, the social and institutional resources available within the community were crucial to their eventual successes. Family, school, and community organizations all played important roles in the passages they made from at-risk adolescents to competent and successful adults. Generally, the social environment in which they lived as they were coming of age in Washington reinforced the validity of values and norms that were necessary for their eventual success in the workplace.

Study participants were surrounded by family members and others in the community who worked hard to support themselves and to help relatives and friends who were in even greater need. Under such circumstances, the value of work was apparent. Also painfully apparent was the difficulty of the work that was initially available to them and others in their families. Accordingly, most had a strong desire to learn English, get an education, and to learn the skills that would be necessary to enter more rewarding careers. At first, family members and friends were the primary means of locating entry-level jobs. Ultimately, the ability of family members and friends to help was limited, however, because they, too, were outsiders to the economic and social system of Washington. Even though entry- level jobs seldom were hard to find, study participants knew that their long-term success depended on developing skills that would keep them from becoming trapped at the margins of U.S. society.

MCIP was a community resource utilized by all in this study. Most of the school's staff were bilingual and familiar with the many needs of the students and their families. The school provided

important counselling services that helped them to address a variety of serious problems. Besides teaching the standard academic lessons of high school and providing counselling services, MCIP emphasized the relevance of education for the pressing of its students to make a living. Through its career development programs, the school facilitated the successful integration of study participants into the economic and social institutions of the wider society. Its multicultural focus also communicated the important message that successful participation in the wider society did not require the abandonment of cultural identity or ethnic heritage[3].

The community that formed around the school and other predominantly Latino community organizations was, itself, important for the eventual success of these "at risk" Latino youths. This community constituted a culturally congruent social environment where young people learned the lessons and values necessary to function in the wider society. These lessons were taught not only through formal instruction, but also in the ongoing pattern of rewarding social interaction among the youths, themselves, and with adults. The young Latinos in this study learned through their involvement in the institutions of their local community that they could also become respected and competent participants in the dominant economic and social institutions of the city.

Local community institutions provided specific services such as education and job training and conveyed to the youths values that were both functional and meaningful in the local community, and beyond. In so doing, they built bridges connecting this population of at-risk youths with opportunities available in the greater Washington community. Thus, the school and other community organizations functioned as mediating structures (Berger 1976:399; Berger and Neuhaus 1981) that were both models for, and conduits to effective participation in society, at large. Access to local institutions that effectively performed this mediating function was, perhaps, the most important factor preventing the young Latinos described here from becoming trapped at the margins of society.

This report has described the experiences of a small number of at-risk Latino youths in Washington, D.C. as they made the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Their successes are not necessarily typical of other Latino youths in the city. This group of young people had access to effective educational and job training programs that may not have been available to others. Many other Washington Latinos never had the opportunity to attend MCIP, or any other high school, because they needed to work or because they had not even gone beyond the early grades of elementary school in their native countries. Nonetheless, the stories that this group tells of their successes and failures are instructive. They provide a detailed understanding of the problems that at-risk youths face from their own points of view. They also describe how public institutions, community organizations, families, and the youths, themselves, addressed those problems.

Understanding the experiences of this group of young Latinos can be helpful in comprehending the needs of other at-risk youths. Accounts of their work experiences and educational histories also may be of value in the development of governmental and community based strategies to connect other such youths with the opportunities they need to realize their dreams.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. According to Wilson, many social scientists have been reluctant to examine this issue since Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family* was published in 1965.

2. Wilson differentiates his argument regarding persistent poverty from what he calls "culture of poverty" explanations that focus on the values, beliefs and behavior patterns of the poor (Wilson 1987:56). According to Wilson, conservative scholars tend to explain long-term poverty in terms of the values and beliefs of the poor, which they describe as part of a self-perpetuating culture of poverty (see Lewis 1968). He argues that scholars such as Charles Murray (1984), George Gilder (1981) and Thomas Sowell (1981) directly or indirectly draw on the work of Oscar Lewis in attributing the problems of the poor to their culture, thereby effectively blaming the poor for their poverty. Wilson notes, however, that such scholars tend to ignore Lewis's argument that the culture of poverty is an adaptive response by the poor to their position in society, and that, in some cases, social change may cause the culture of poverty to disappear (Wilson 1987:13). Although Wilson admits that the persistently poor may maintain beliefs and behavior patterns that prevent them from effectively participating in mainstream society, the problems of the persistently poor are more fundamentally related to structural changes in the economy, and the social isolation of poor blacks and Hispanics in inner city neighborhoods (1988:59). Wilson cites a need for more ethnographic investigations among the poor (1987:18) that examine the culture and social organization of poor people in the appropriate context. In Wilson's words, "...in sharp contrast to approaches that simply 'blame the victim' or that use a 'culture-of-poverty' thesis to explain group disadvantages, the works of scholars such as [Kenneth] Clark, [Lee] Rainwater and [Elliot] Liebow not only presented a sensitive portrayal of the destructive features of ghetto life, they also provided a comprehensive analysis of the deleterious structural conditions that produce these features." (1988:127).

3. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census Poverty Statistics Branch, the poverty threshold in 1986 was set at $5,572 for a single person, $8,737 for a family of three, and $11,203 for a family of four.

4. For further discussion of this topic, see chapter 4.

5. Almost all informants in the study arrived in the United States prior to January 1, 1982, the cut-off date for eligibility for the amnesty provision of the 1986 immigration law. This law

made eligible for permanent residency undocumented aliens who could demonstrate that they had been living in the United States continuously since December of 1981.

6. Using the definition of J. Milton Yinger (1986:22), an "ethnic group" is "a segment of a larger society ... seen by others to be different in some combination of the following characteristics --language, religion, race, and ancestral homeland with its related culture; the members also perceive themselves in that way; and they participate in shared activities built around their (real or mythical) common origin and culture."

"Race" is used here as a social rather than biological category. Many scholars (c.f. Montagu 1974) consider the concept of "race" to be too imprecise to meaningfully describe the biological variation of *Homo sapiens*. Regardless of its utility as a biological concept, "race" is a sociologically meaningful concept. Following Yinger (1986:22), a racial group is defined here as a type of ethnic group that is defined partially on the basis of phenotypic features.

7. Some Washingtonians of Latin American origin object to the use of the terms "Spanish" and "Hispanic," however, because of the implication of European racial or cultural characteristics. The term "Latino" is understood as not necessarily implying European traits. For this reason, the term is used by some agencies and community organizations that attempt to represent the interests of the city's residents of Latin American origin (e.g. Office on Latino Affairs; Commission on Latino Community Development). "Latino" is the term most often used in this report, except when referring to the work of others who use terms "Hispanic" or "Spanish."

8. Although Washington Latinos are racially heterogeneous, most are people of color.

9. Intermittent contact was maintained with some of the participants in the 1882-83 study through continued participation as a volunteer teacher and a period of membership on the Board of Directors of the school (1985-86).

10. The interviews were conducted by Timothy Ready, and a research assistant, Ms. Marvette Pérez, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology of The Catholic University of America.

CHAPTER 2

1. The house was part of the Sanctuary Movement, which assisted Central Americans who were seeking refuge from war related violence to resettle.

2. Right wing para-military group.

3. For a discussion of refugee mental health see: J.D. Cohon, Psychological Adaptation and Dysfunction among Refugees. *International Migration Review* 15(2): 255-275.

CHAPTER 3

1. The idea of measuring subjective assessments of person-environment fit is related to Rudolf Moos' (1976) work in measuring social climates, or the "personality of the environment." The PSAI differs in its objectives from Moos' instrument, however, in that its focus is not primarily how different social environments are perceived, but rather, the subjective appraisals diverse informants about how they are doing in different social contexts (Lazarus and Folkman 1984).

2. PSAI items that were statistically related to HOS scores during the 1982 study of psychosocial adaptation of immigrant adolescents. The scores presented below are for Latino participants in that study who completed both the Health Opinion Survey (HOS) and the Psychosocial Adaptation Instrument (PSAI).

IDENTIFICATION WITH BEHAVIORAL NORMS IN FAMILY: "I FEEL THAT I CANNOT REALLY BE MYSELF OR ACT THE WAY THAT I WANT TO WHEN I AM WITH MY FAMILY."

	HIGH	BORDERLINE	LOW
AGREE	24 (71%)	25 (49%)	17 (30%)
DISAGREE	10 (29%)	26 (51%)	39 (70%)

$X^2 = 15.6$ $p<.05$ 2 df

SENSE OF ADEQUACY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FAMILY: "I OFTEN WORRY THAT I AM A DISAPPOINTMENT TO MY FAMILY."

	HIGH	BORDERLINE	LOW
AGREE	13 (46%)	10 (22%)	11 (25%)
DISAGREE	13 (54%)	39 (78%)	47 (75%)

$X^2 = 9.3$ $p<.05$ 2 df

PERCEIVED PRESENCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT: "WHEN I HAVE A PROBLEM, I FEEL THAT USUALLY THERE IS SOMEONE TO TURN TO WHOM I CAN TRUST AND WHO IS WILLING AND ABLE TO HELP."

	HIGH	BORDERLINE	LOW

AGREE	22 (63%)	41 (79%)	50 (85%)
DISAGREE	13 (37%)	11 (21%)	9 (15%)

$X^2 = 5.2$ $p<.05$ 2 df

IDENTIFICATION WITH BEHAVIORAL NORMS IN GENERAL: "THE WAY THAT I LIKE TO ACT IS OFTEN DIFFERENT FROM WHAT OTHERS WOULD LIKE ME TO DO."

	HIGH	BORDERLINE	LOW
AGREE	22 (79%)	37 (82%)	22 (50%)
DISAGREE	6 (21%)	8 (18%)	22 (50%)

$X^2 = 13.6$ $p<.05$ 2 df

BOREDOM: "I OFTEN FEEL BORED."

	HIGH	BORDERLINE	LOW
AGREE	22 (67%)	21 (40%)	15 (25%)
DISAGREE	11 (33%)	32 (60%)	45 (75%)

$X^2 = 13.3$ $p<.05$ 2 df

HAPPY: "I FEEL THAT MOST OF THE OTHER STUDENTS IN THIS SCHOOL ARE HAPPIER THAN I AM."

	HIGH	BORDERLINE	LOW
AGREE	20 (87%)	16 (55%)	12 (28%)
DISAGREE	3 (13%)	13 (45%)	31 (72%)

$X^2 = 22.8$ $p<.05$ 2 df

FRUSTRATION: "WHEN SOMETHING I DO DOES NOT TURN OUT WELL, I OFTEN REACT BY BECOMING FRUSTRATED."

	HIGH	BORDERLINE	LOW
AGREE	17 (55%)	16 (41%)	5 (11%)
DISAGREE	14 (45%)	23 (59%)	42 (89%)

$X^2 = 18.2$ $p<.05$ 2 df

PSAI items measuring sense of relatedness, clarity of behavioral norms, identification with those norms, and sense of adequacy within the school environment overwhelmingly indicated harmonious adjustment within that environment. None of the PSAI

items pertaining to the school environment could be tested for a potential statistical relationship with HOS scores because the number of responses indicating problematic adaptation at school was insufficient for a chi-square analysis.

3. SER (Service, Employment and Redevelopment) is an organization affiliated with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American GI Forum. LULAC and the American GI Forum are major Hispanic American organizations.

4. The Career Intern Program (CIP) Model was developed in the early 1970s by Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Inc. (OIC/A). The organization was founded by the Reverend Leon Sullivan of Philadelphia.

CHAPTER 4

1. Thirty-seven percent (40/112) of interviewees had not received a high school diploma or earned a GED by 1988. Interviewees' high school completion rate of 63% is almost identical to that of the total study population (61%), as reported in Chapter 3. Because of this similarity in the educational status of interviewees and the larger population, it is believed that the more detailed information regarding educational histories collected during the interviews is representative of the larger study population.

2. Of the 38 persons whose post-secondary educational status could not be determined, 21 are male and 17 are female. Seventeen of the 38 graduated from high school while seven had not. The graduation status of 13 is unknown.

3. Both graduated in the spring of 1989.

CHAPTER 5

1. See comments by Sal Bolaños, Carlos Zapata, Berta Patiño, Rosalba Pérez, Roger Rodriguez, Ronnie Toloza, Manolo Pérez, Elmer Villareal, Cristobol Ochoa, Marvin Vasquez, Linda Berlanga and Maria Garcia.

CHAPTER 6

1. See Marcos' comments regarding the motivation of some youths to quit school and to settle for inferior jobs in Chapter 3.

2. By caste minorities, Ogbu means minority groups that have long been relegated by law or custom to an inferior social and economic status within a society (e.g. Black Americans in the United States, pariah and other "outcaste" groups in India).

3. For a discussion of how success in formal education is sometimes equated with denial of social and cultural identities by at-risk youths, see Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu, "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the "Burden of 'Acting White.'" *The Urban Review* 18 (3):176-206.

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